

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**LEADERSHIP STYLES DEPLOYED BY WOMEN PROJECT MANAGERS AT  
ESKOM ENTERPRISE DIVISION**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I Busisiwe M Maseko declare that

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- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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## **ABSTRACT**

Leadership styles have been shown to have an impact on the success or failure of projects in organizations. Effective leadership is therefore required by organizations to ensure the successful delivery of projects. The study aimed at investigating the leadership styles utilized by women project managers in the Eskom Enterprise Division and possible barriers that prevent them from reaching top positions. The study utilized leadership theories as the theoretical framework and used the qualitative research approach. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 female project managers in Eskom Enterprise Division and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Certain leadership styles and characteristics were identified as being critical for successful project managers. The characteristics that these women project managers exhibit described qualities of transformational, democratic and people oriented leadership styles. The women project managers seem to be successful and there were a number of factors that contributed to their success. The female project managers did not believe that gender should determine their leadership style, but they believed that working as a project manager required certain leadership skills and competencies to meet the project's objectives and the leadership style was not influenced by gender. Some of the barriers identified were: gender stereotyping, lack of qualifications, fear of not succeeding, family responsibilities and lack of networking skills and time. Most of the women believe that breaking some of the barriers requires that they should work twice as hard as their male counterparts, and that they should prove wrong the stereotype that men are better project managers. Furthermore, the findings show that Eskom has few women occupying top management positions. Eskom is still a male dominated environment even though initiatives for gender transformation exist.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
Glossary .....	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Eskom's history.....	2
1.3 Motivation for the study .....	3
1.4 Focus of the study .....	4
1.5 Problem statement of the study .....	4
1.6 Objectives of the research .....	6
1.7 Limitations of the study.....	6
1.8 Significance of the study .....	6
1.9 Structure of the study .....	7
1.9.1 Chapter 2.....	7
1.9.2 Chapter 3 .....	7
1.9.3 Chapter 4.....	7
1.9.4 Chapter 5.....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
2.1 Introduction.....	8
2.2 Management and leadership theories.....	8
2.2.1 Management theories.....	8
2.2.2 Leadership theories.....	9
2.3 Project defined .....	12
2.4 Project management.....	13
2.5 Project manager's role and responsibilities .....	13
2.6 Leadership .....	13
2.6.1 The importance of leaders and leadership .....	14
2.6.2 Leadership traits required for effective project leadership .....	15
2.6.3 Traits required for effective project managers .....	18

2.7	Leadership styles .....	20
2.7.1	Leadership behaviors .....	20
2.7.2	Cultural influences, gender and leadership .....	21
2.8	Leadership styles in projects .....	22
2.9	Comparing male and female leadership styles .....	24
2.10	Women leadership and leadership styles .....	26
2.11	Global representation of women in top leadership positions .....	28
2.12	Representation of women in top leadership positions in South Africa .....	29
2.13	Representation of women in management position at Eskom .....	29
2.14	Barriers that prevent the advancement of women to top leadership positions .....	32
2.14.1	Sex role orientation .....	32
2.14.2	Gender stereotyping on leadership .....	33
2.14.3	Glass ceiling .....	35
2.14.4	Family responsibilities .....	36
2.15	Women leadership and general challenges encountered by women in leadership positions .....	36
2.16	Summary .....	37
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....		39
3.1	Introduction.....	39
3.2	Research design/methodology .....	39
3.3	Research methods.....	39
3.3.1	Qualitative method .....	39
3.3.2	Quantitative method.....	40
3.4	Method of data collection.....	40
3.5	Ethical issues .....	41
3.6	Validity.....	41
3.7	Reliability.....	42
3.8	Did the design answer the research questions? .....	42
3.9	Sampling method .....	42
3.10	Research questions .....	43
3.11	Interview questions analysis .....	44
3.12	Data analysis.....	44

3.13	Description of research site .....	45
3.13.1	Background on NBPs partnerships .....	45
3.14	Summary .....	46
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .....		48
4.1	Introduction.....	48
4.1.1	Theme 1: Leadership styles .....	48
4.1.2	Theme 2: Impact of the leadership style on the delivery of the project .....	67
4.1.3	Theme 3: Challenges faced by women project managers at EED .....	69
4.1.4	Theme 4: Barriers that prevent the advancement of women project managers into senior management positions .....	73
4.1.5	Theme 5: Factors that contribute to the success of women project managers .....	79
4.1.6	Theme 6: Women project manager's views on gender transformation.....	84
4.2	Conclusion .....	88
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....		90
5.1	Introduction.....	90
5.2	Conclusions.....	90
5.3	Implications of this research .....	93
5.4	Recommendations .....	94
5.5	Recommendation for future studies.....	97
Bibliography .....		99

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Interview Questions .....	107
Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form.....	109
Appendix 3: Ethical clearance .....	111

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2.1 Six modern and three historical schools of leadership .....	10
Table 2. 2 Fifteen leadership competencies .....	12
Table 2. 3 Six specific skills and behaviours of an effective people project manager .....	18

Table 2.4 Comparison of female and male attributes.....	25
Table 2. 5 Employment equity report -November 2010 .....	30
Table 2. 6 Breakdown of females in different management categories.....	31
Table 2. 7 Comparison of 2004 equity statistics to 2010 equity statistics.....	31
Table 3. 1 Demographical information of the respondents.....	44



## Glossary

For the purpose of the research, the following terms apply:

- Behavior – the way in which a leader conducts himself. Research states that this behavior is mostly influenced by the individual's traditional culture.
- B & V – Black and Veach.
- CEE – Commission of Employment Equity.
- CGE – A framework for transforming gender relations in South Africa, written and presented by the Commission on Gender Equality (2000). The CGE is an independent public body. It was established in accordance with the Commission on Gender Equality Act No. 39 of 1996.
- EED – Eskom Enterprise Division.
- EI – Emotional Intelligence.
- FIDIC – International Federation of Consulting Engineers.
- GBE – Generation Business Engineering.
- GLP – Generation Leadership Programme.
- Gender: Female (feminine) or male (masculine).
- Leadership styles – leadership traits applied to different situations.
- New Build Projects (NBPs) – refers to a completely new project which is normally called a green field project. In Eskom there are two types of projects, firstly, projects to modify/and or maintain the existing plants such as the Return to Service (RTS) projects namely, Camden, Grootvlei and Komati. Secondly, projects that involve building a new power station from scratch (New Build Project – NBP). The New Build Projects – Medupi, Kusile and Ingula form part of the Eskom Enterprise Division within Eskom. The RTS projects and NBPs form part of the capacity expansion programme to meet the increase in electricity demand in South Africa.
- PMBOK - Project Management Body of Knowledge.
- Stereotypes – Having perceptions and classifying individual behaviors according to their gender. Stereotypes could be based on social beliefs and are ordinarily strongly influenced by culture/tradition.

- Traits – refer to a variety of individual characteristics such as personality, attitude, qualities, skills, values, capacities or patterns of behavior. Quality/attribute will be used interchangeably with traits.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Eskom is a power utility company in South Africa which is wholly owned by the government of the Republic of South Africa. Eskom has a major role to play in South Africa as a whole. About 95 percent of the electricity produced by Eskom is used in South Africa and approximately 45 percent of the electricity used in Africa. Eskom's division includes generation, transmission and distribution of electricity to industrial, mining, agricultural, commercial, residential customers and redistributors (Eskom Holdings Limited Integrated Report, 2010). Its role includes providing electricity to all South Africans, supporting other industries such as the coal mining sector, driving transformation, creating jobs and new industries from the build programmes and providing a reliable electricity infrastructure.

Eskom Enterprise Division is responsible for all projects implemented by Eskom. The New Build Projects (NBPs) - Medupi, Kusile and Ingula forms part of the Eskom Enterprise Division and they are complex projects interfacing between Engineering, Commercial and Project Management Departments. They involve many individuals across disciplines, multi-cultural project teams (having members from different cultural backgrounds working in South Africa), gender, age groups, etc. These variables in people result in different behaviors that increase the complexity of having to build the power stations under major cost constraints and having to deliver new power stations on time. What is challenging is the fact that Eskom has not built a new power station in the last 20 years. It is estimated that the NBPs will generate 40 000 direct and indirect jobs, by March 2013. Not only is building new power stations a challenge, but in today's competitive world, Eskom requires managers who will drive teams to accomplish tasks while producing good quality products (Lekganyane & Oosthuizen, 2006).

Effective leadership is required in such an environment to ensure that the company has competent and suitable leaders that are equipped with proper leadership skills to meet the demands of the project and that the goals of delivering a new power station are met.

## **1.2 Eskom's history**

Prior to 1994, Eskom was dominated by the white male population group in all positions of leadership. The workforce in power stations for example, Simmerpan power station, consisted only of men who did all the work from technical to cleaning and secretarial duties (Eskom, 2010).

During the apartheid regime, not only was women representation very low, but it was compounded by issues of race and color not only in Eskom but in South Africa as a whole. Black employees occupied low positions as compared to whites who had privileges and benefits and were given preferential treatment. In addition, racism and gender discrimination was another formidable problem. Under-development of women as a result of racism is one of the challenges that African women have had to deal with.

Post-apartheid government programs such as Commission of Gender and Equality (CGE, 2000), together with other policies such as the Employment Equity Act Equity (No. 55 of 1998) were introduced as a means of addressing the social imbalances created by previous apartheid policies which favored white males in all spheres of society and economy.

After 1994, the government embarked on a transformation program to change the face of government by making it representative of the diversity of society. According to South African Central Statistical Service (2010), women in South Africa account for 51 percent of the population, and yet prior to 1994 accounted for less than 10 percent of management positions in Government and Public Enterprises.

In the global perspective, gender equality and transformation is not new. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the world and Africa in particular, experienced significant changes and advancement in terms of technological, scientific, political changes and the dismantling of the apartheid system. One of the most notable changes worldwide and in Africa in particular has been the emancipation of women in terms of voting and property rights, and lastly as holders of high office in private, public, political and voluntary organizations.

In 2010, Eskom went through business changes and challenges. The shortage of electricity leading to load shedding and thereafter increases in electricity tariffs, coupled with the resignation of the CEO and Chairman in 2010, resulted in negative publicity, suspicion and doubt of the leadership. These upheavals in the organization make the general public question Eskom's capability in building new power stations. Building one of the biggest power stations in the world is a mega project which requires leadership that drives the organizational goals and ensures the organization's success.

One of Eskom's areas of focus in the previous financial year has been on improved leadership. Eskom Holdings Limited Annual report (2009, p.94) stated that a focus on improving leadership capabilities would contribute to the organization's "vision, values and strategic intent". The report further stated that the public considers leadership to be the second most important driver of the company's reputation and strong leadership in particular is a contributing factor towards product reliability and customer service.

One of Eskom's initiatives is employment equity that will reflect a balance in the South African diversity and part of the transformational agenda includes promoting women in order to balance the positions of leadership within the organization (Eskom Holdings Limited Annual report, 2009). NBPs have recently been filled with women project managers who are just getting into the positions that have been previously dominated by men. The research focuses on women project managers at Eskom Enterprise Division (EED) within NBPs, Medupi, Kusile and Ingula power stations and it identifies leadership styles that women deploy and whether their leadership styles provide them with the competencies required to be successful as women project managers in a male dominated environment.

### **1.3 Motivation for the study**

This study has been inspired firstly by the researcher's own experiences as part of the women project managers in the NBPs. In recent times, the talk of women leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is associated with women being better suited for new leadership styles (Coughlin, et al., 2005). Women are attesting that they are just as competent as men in performing tasks (Rosener, 1990). Literature suggests that the leadership styles of men and women have, in most cases, been stereotyped according to gender. This has had its own impact on the individual's

behavior and most especially, in how women are perceived in the working environment (Powell, 2011).

In Medupi (one of the NBPs) alone, at the early phases of the project, there were only two female project managers on the entire project. The researcher having been a project manager in the coal and ash department for over three years had her own challenges in what is perceived as a male-dominated project. From the researcher's experiences, there is still a very high level of resistance when it comes to men taking instructions from women. It is much easier for a man to take instructions from a male superior than from a female in a similar or higher position. There is still a struggle in terms of men understanding the role of a woman in a project. This in turn limits cooperation from men resulting in poor communication, in most cases among the members. This could have a negative impact on the project. Working in this kind of project environment, mostly consisting of contractors, engineers and multicultural teams, requires women to have leadership qualities which will assist in blending with the environment. Secondly although similar research has been done in the area of the roles of women leading transformation in Eskom (Midgley, 2003), research on leadership styles by women in projects has not been conducted.

#### **1.4 Focus of the study**

In order to meet the demand in the electricity increase, Eskom has embarked on building new power stations, namely, Medupi, Kusile and Ingula. These projects fall within the Eskom Enterprise Division. Prior to 1994, Eskom was highly dominated by males in all levels of leadership. Eskom has now adopted a transformational agenda which includes promoting women in order to balance the positions of leadership within the organization. In order to achieve this, management positions in the NBPs have recently been filled with women project managers. These positions have previously been occupied by men. The focus of this study is on women project managers in the Eskom Enterprise Division.

#### **1.5 Problem statement of the study**

Leadership styles play a critical determinant role towards the advancement of people to higher leadership positions in an organization (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Considering the transformation drive at Eskom, one would assume that this would reflect in the number of

women in top leadership positions at Eskom; however this is not the case. Statistics show that in the category of the 21 top management positions, five (24 percent) were occupied by females and 16 (76 percent) occupied by males. Of 427 senior management positions, 95 (22 percent) were occupied by females and 332 (78 percent) occupied by males. The same with middle management, where there were 5,501 positions of which 1,708 (31 percent) were occupied by women and 3,793 (69 percent) were occupied by men and in the junior management category which had 17,784 positions, 6,586 (37 percent) were occupied by women and 11,198 (63 percent) occupied by men.

It is clear from the above statistics that there is low representation of women in leadership positions at Eskom. In an organization that has a clear transformation agenda that is geared towards increasing the representation of women at all leadership positions, this raises questions into whether women's leadership styles are a limitation towards their advancement to top leadership positions or if there are any barriers that limit them from rising to top management positions.

While a number of studies have indicated the role of a project manager to be critical to project success, Müller and Turner (2007) and Wu (2011) argue that the impact of a project manager's competence and leadership style on project success are excluded in the literature review of success factors of projects. This presents a very interesting study considering that Eskom has been a male dominated organization for the past few decades and women have only recently started occupying leadership positions.

NBPs are part of the expansion programme to meet the increased demand of electricity in South Africa and the successful completion of these projects is critical to the success of the organization going forward. The successful completion of the project depends on the project manager's ability to ensure that the organization's objectives and deliverables are met. While the focus on NBPs is to deliver new power stations, it cannot be successful without appropriate leadership. Bass (1990) stated that leaders can determine the success or failure of organizations. Good leadership is required to drive and lead people to achieve the tasks. Although women are increasing in the junior and middle management positions they still struggle to reach senior and top management positions which remain highly male dominated.

### **1.6 Objectives of the research**

The main objective of the research is to identify the leadership styles utilized by women project managers at EED, specifically in the NBPs. Other objectives that will be addressed through this project will include:

- To determine the impact of the leadership styles on the delivery of the project.
- Find out the challenges faced by women project managers at EED.
- Barriers that prevent the advancement of women project managers into senior leadership positions.
- Establish factors that contribute to the success of women project managers.
- Women project manager's views on gender transformation at Eskom.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

The study was limited to women project managers in the Eskom Enterprise division and not to other divisions within the organization where similar issues may have been experienced. Time limitations also presented a challenge.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

The study will demonstrate leadership styles deployed by women project managers, their challenges and the barriers that prevent their advancement into senior management positions. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on leadership styles of women in project management which has hitherto not been an area of much study. This study hopes to make women project managers aware of the issues surrounding the leadership styles of women in NBPs and can be used as a learning tool for women, not only in projects but in other Eskom divisions. The researcher hopes that through this study, women can transpose their behavior to develop leadership styles that are effective to meet the current challenges in a successful manner and that it will assist with proper succession planning out of the highly skilled pool of women project managers. Furthermore, newly recruited women will be in a position to emulate the competency that exists within Eskom project managers, thus boosting their confidence and increasing the number of competent women that can take up leadership roles within the organization.



## **1.9 Structure of the study**

The research consists of five chapters which are detailed below:

### **1.9.1 Chapter 2**

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. It focuses on the framework of the study which is the project leadership framework and touches on the challenges and barriers faced by women in the working environment.

### **1.9.2 Chapter 3**

The research methodology is described in this chapter.

### **1.9.3 Chapter 4**

This chapter presents the findings of the research and discussion thereof.

### **1.9.4 Chapter 5**

This is the final chapter which concludes the research and gives recommendations for the future.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews how other authors define leadership and leadership styles. It explores theories on leadership and places leadership styles within a broader theoretical framework of leadership. Most authors reflect on the leadership traits/qualities that determine effective leaders, while others define the leadership attributes for successful and effective project managers. Studies on leadership extend to the comparison of leadership styles and gender. Authors who have conducted studies on leadership state that leadership styles, have in most cases been gender stereotyped according to societal perceptions and expectations driven by tradition and culture, which have a major impact on the behavior of the individual. In most cases, this stereotyping has its impact on the behavior of the individual and together with the glass ceiling have been reported as some of the impediments that hinders women's progress to top management positions.

The concept of leadership is closely linked to the history of management and leadership theory. The theoretical framework of this research is informed by the leadership theories which have evolved over the past seventy decades.

### **2.2 Management and leadership theories**

#### **2.2.1 Management theories**

Scientific management theories, also known as traditional management theories, are based on scientific analysis of a task which is then used to prescribe how employees should perform a task. These theories date back to the times of Frederick W Taylor, who is said to be the father of scientific management (dos Santos, et al., 2002). Taylor is famous for his emphasis on the effective utilization of time in the workplace. While Taylor was interested in minimizing the time taken to complete a task, Gilbreth was interested in minimizing the amount of steps/movements required to complete a task (dos. Santos, et al., 2002). In this context, productivity was increased by reducing unnecessary motions while performing a task. Clearly employees did not have much of a say in how they were supposed to do their work, as management already prescribed it to them.

Unlike the scientific management theories where the role of a manager was to prescribe to the employees how to do a task, Wren (1995) cited Henri Fayol's speech of administrative principles published in 1908. Fayol believed that the role of a manager was actually administration. Fayol spoke about fourteen principles of administration which governed people management. These included unity of control, centralization, separation of power and order, to name but a few.

The theories cited above put emphasis on managers and their duties without taking into consideration the employee's abilities and motivations in performing a task. This is not too different to the Theory X thinking which was introduced by McGregor (1960). According to Theory X, people are generally lazy, lack ambition and prefer to be told what to do without showing initiative. This implies that the manager's role is therefore, to ensure that employees perform their duties as and when told. This is in contrast to Theory Y where employees are perceived to be motivated and committed.

While the theories described above were appropriate for the times during which they were developed, they are unlikely to produce desired results in this day and age. Eskom's employee management system provides the employees with opportunities to perform their tasks/duties in a manner that suits them provided that the performance target is achieved within the organization's business ethics; this invariably challenges the traditional management theories. Theory Y thinking was introduced by McGregor (1960) and assumes that people are motivated, committed and willing to perform their duties the best way they can; therefore, the way managers approach or handle employees has a lot to do with the way employees behave. Prior to McGregor's Theory Y, dos. Santos, et al. (2002) reported on the results of the effect of lighting on the productivity of employees in a Hawthorne plant conducted from 1924 to 1932. From this study it was concluded that the interrelations of people in a factory contribute to their level of productivity.

### **2.2.2 Leadership theories**

Leadership theories are summarized in Table 2.1 extracted from Müller and Turner, (2007).

**Table 2.1 Six modern and three historical schools of leadership**

Six modern and three historical schools of leadership			
School	Period	Main idea	Example authors
Confucius	500BC	Relationships ( <i>jen</i> ), values ( <i>xiao</i> ) process ( <i>li</i> ), moderation ( <i>zhang rong</i> )	Chen [8]
Aristotle	300 BC	Relationships ( <i>pathos</i> ) values ( <i>ethos</i> ), process ( <i>logos</i> )	Collinson [9] Covey [11]
Barnard	1938	Relationships versus process	Barnard [1]
Trait	1930s-1940s	Effective leaders show common traits, leaders born not made	Kirkpatrick and Locke [25]
Behaviour or style	1940s-1950s	Effective leaders adopt certain styles or behaviours. Leadership skills can be developed	Blake and Mouton [4] Tannenbaum and Schmidt [35]
Contingency	1960s-1970s	What makes an effective leader depends on the situation	Fiedler [17], House [21], Robbins [34]
Visionary or charismatic	1980s-1990s	Two styles: Transformational: concern for relationships Transactional: concern for process	Bass [2]
Emotional intelligence	2000s	Emotional intelligence has a greater impact on performance than intellect	Goleman et al. [19]
Competency	2000s	Effective leaders exhibit certain competencies, including traits, behaviours and styles. Emotions, process, intellect Different profiles of competence better in different situations	Dulewicz and Higgs [16]

Source: Müller and Turner (2007, p.22)

The table shows schools of leadership, which have been selected from literature by different authors. The schools are split into three historical schools and six modern schools.

The historical schools (Confucius, Aristotle and Barnard) defined two types of leaders, those who focus on building relationships with their teams and those who focus on processes rather than building relationships. The trait school of leadership was discovered in the early years from 1930 – 1940. A trait refers to an individual's characteristics, such as intentions, personality, qualities, needs, values, skills, capacities, or patterns of behavior. The school states that leaders demonstrate similar traits and are born not made. The 1940s introduced the behavior school which asserted that leadership styles adopted by leaders are to be suitable for different situations. Unlike the trait school of leadership, this style can be learned. The 1960s saw the emergence of the contingency school, which emphasized the importance of matching

the leadership style to a particular situation and adjusting that leadership style to changing situations.

In the 1980s, the visionary and charismatic school was developed, which had similar views to the historical schools. This school introduced transformational and transactional leadership. The Transformational leaders are relationship oriented – they are charismatic, vision oriented and committed to building respect and trust. Here people are motivated to be self-driven whilst performing above their utmost level. In contrast, transactional leaders are process oriented – they are performance driven and reward completed tasks. Failure to complete a task results in disciplinary action. Thite (2000) refers to this leadership as a contractual agreement for performance between the leader and the subordinate. Keegan and Den Hartog (2004) argued that project managers when compared to line managers find it difficult to exercise transformational leadership in hierarchical and traditionally managed organizations. This they explained was due to the development and career decisions which are determined by the line manager and remain his responsibility. While the solution would be to involve the leadership of a project manager, the rules and regulations set by the organization could further hamper this involvement, most especially where the project and line manager can have a conflict in terms of performance appraisal and succession planning. This argument is supported by their results which reflected that transformational leadership linked strongly with commitment and motivation in the line teams and showed no link between transformational leadership and commitment to the project teams.

The Emotional Intelligence (EI) school, originated in the year 2000. In this school, emotional abilities were identified as being more important for leadership than intellectual abilities. According to Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) citing Dulewicz and Higgs (2003), the Competency school was the last school which emerged in the 2000s comprising all the earlier schools of leadership. The school of competency was further developed into 15 leadership competencies, which were categorized into three groups namely; intellectual (IQ), Managerial (MQ) and emotional (EQ) as shown in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 2. 2 Fifteen leadership competencies**

Fifteen leadership competencies	
Group	Competency
Intellectual (IQ)	1. Critical analysis & judgement
	2. Vision and imagination
	3. Strategic perspective
Managerial (MQ)	4. Engaging communication
	5. Managing resources
	6. Empowering
	7. Developing
Emotional (EQ)	8. Achieving
	9. Self-awareness
	10. Emotional resilience
	11. Motivation
	12. Sensitivity
	13. Influence
	14. Intuitiveness
	15. Conscientiousness

Source: Dulewicz and Higgs (2005, p.111-112)

The management and leadership theories show that although there are differences between the theories, there are also links. Management theories focused on getting a task done and were production oriented, whilst leadership theories focused more on the human side of people, by looking into traits, behaviors and attitudes of leaders. How one leads determines the type of manager they are. One manages work in a project by getting a task done and leads people by influencing them to perform the task willingly (Armandi, et al., 2003). This is the reason that the terms manager and leader will be used interchangeably in this research.

### **2.3 Project defined**

The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide, 2004) defines a project as anything with a start and finish to create a product or service. Our everyday lives are projects because the day begins with planned activities, implementing those activities and closing out by the end of the day. For others, it is planning over a month, year, etc. The world we live in is project oriented. Meredith and Mantel (1995) broadly define a project as a task to be completed in order to accomplish a goal.

## **2.4 Project management**

Project management is setting out to accomplish the project's goal by applying knowledge and skills, amongst others. This goal is achieved by the project manager through coordination and integration of all the activities required to accomplish the goal within a specified time, cost, quality and performance and through the project's lifecycle (Meredith & Mantel, 1995; PMBOK guide, 2004). Any project orientated work requires individual leadership abilities.

## **2.5 Project manager's role and responsibilities**

Armandi, et al. (2003) and Sunindijo, et al. (2007) described the task of a project manager as that of a leader that influences people to ensure that the organization's objectives and deliverables are met, and is required to have human skills to handle people and conflicts. Armandi, et al. (2003) ascertained that the project manager can accomplish these objectives through leadership in planning, organizing and control.

Kerzner (2006, p.10) described the project manager's role as "responsible for coordinating and integrating activities across multiple, functional lines". The activities to be integrated include developing a plan, executing the plan and making changes to the plan. Kerzner (2006) stated that integrating activities includes converting inputs such as resources to outputs, namely: products and profits. Therefore strong communication, interpersonal skills and knowledge of the business and technology are required by the project manager to carry out such duties.

Pheng and Chuvessiriporn (1997) compared the task of a project manager to that of a General. Just as the General is appointed in the army to lead his troops to successfully execute his mission and ultimately win the battle for his country, the project manager is responsible for leading a team towards delivering a successfully completed project within a specified time, cost, quality and ensuring that the customer requirements are met. His findings on military vs. project leadership revealed that the style of leadership of a General is autocratic (task-oriented) while the project manager is ideally democratic (relationship-oriented)

## **2.6 Leadership**

Leadership is a subject that has been lengthily and broadly discussed by several authors. There are many definitions of leadership. The researcher has chosen the definition by Appelbaum, et

al. (2003) who defined leadership as the ingredient to corporate success which means that rising to more senior positions requires a person to be recognized as a leader and have full potential for leadership. A project manager automatically assumes the role of a leader. The leadership style determines the success of the objectives to be delivered, therefore, leadership is an important aspect towards the success of the organization. Leadership is a dynamic process, which is influenced by different variables in an environment/situation. A successful leader will be in a position to apply different leadership styles to suit different situations. Upon successful application of those leadership styles corporate success is always achieved.

Other definitions of leadership include Coughlin, et al. (2005) who referred to effective leadership as an individual's journey of personal understanding that begins from within. Yang, et al. (2011) cited DuBrin (2004), who defined leadership as achieving goals through communicating with others. Bass (1990) defined leadership as collaboration between members in a team to align with the situation, perceptions and expectations of the members.

All the definitions of leadership cited above point to leadership as a set of qualities and competencies which allows them to apply suitable leadership styles for different situations in an attempt to influence subordinates towards a common goal of achieving a task.

### **2.6.1 The importance of leaders and leadership**

Bass (1990) states that leadership has been one of the world's oldest areas of concern which has given rise to the need of acquiring information. He depicted that the behavior of a leader determines her pattern of leadership even though the patterns may differ from time to time due to cultural differences and changes.

Ciulla (1998) looked holistically into the ethical dynamics between leaders and followers. Ciulla (1998) emphasized that the world today requires leadership that is based on trust, commitment and shared values with those who are led.

Bass (1990) states that surveys done on job satisfaction, demonstrate the importance of leaders in having an influence on their subordinates' job satisfaction and performance and because of that, they can also have an influence on whether their organization succeeds or



fails. Satisfaction of employees at work constitutes employee's positive behavior towards their managers which in turn results in increased productivity for the team. The manager's approach to employees is important as it affects their behavior. Burke (2004) shares the same notion, by denoting that the leadership style can affect employee confidence and productivity, therefore good leadership contributes to increased confidence and productivity.

Bass (1990) illustrates that even though theorists have criticized the relevance and usefulness of leadership, considering the gaps in the empirical research, leadership still remains important and no social and political movements can function without leadership. Bass (1990, p.8) quoted Maccoby (1979, p.313) as concluding that "the need of firms to survive and prosper in a world of increasing competition, of technological advances, of changing governmental regulations, of changing worker attitudes, requires a higher level of leadership than ever before". In addition, Bass (1990) concludes that leadership plays a critical role in military successes, education, industrial and social movements.

Gehring (2007) identified three characteristics that create challenging leadership conditions in projects. Firstly, because of the nature of projects being temporary, not continuous (have a start and finish), the focus is more on meeting project goals and objectives which could lead to less focus on leadership development. Secondly, projects have skewed reporting lines which means that while the project manager is not having direct authority over the project team member, she is still accountable for the delivery of the project. Lastly, different people, unknown to each other get together and form groups according to their specialties, driven by work and individual contributions which according to Forsberg, et al. (2000) as quoted by Gehring (2007) may not be desirable, because highly skilled technicians could cause costly errors due to members failing to follow a systematic approach to project management.

## **2.6.2 Leadership traits required for effective project leadership**

Different leadership traits of project managers can determine the success of different types of projects (Müller & Turner, 2007; Gehring, 2007). Lekganyane and Oosthuizen (2006) stated that strong leadership is crucial in coping with change. Their study capitalized on various leadership traits which were indicated by other authors as being relevant for leadership success. These included: dominance, high energy, self-confidence, locus of control, stability,

integrity, intelligence, flexibility, sensitivity to others, abilities and motivation. Their findings from a study conducted on middle managers revealed integrity, intelligence and high energy to be the most dominant traits. Leadership traits which were not as dominant and required attention were flexibility, sensitivity to others and stability.

Howell, et al. (2004) recommended a shift from Fayol to Flores. Howell, et al. (2004, p.3), explain that according to Flores, management in a project is about “making and keeping commitments”. The emphasis in this kind of management is building trust amongst team members. Successful teams are made from a foundation of trust. This is in contrast with Fayol’s definition of management which refers to managing by command and control. Managing by command and control does not encourage trust, and does not demonstrate a pattern of reliability, team work and motivated staff (Howell, et al., 2004). When superiors maintain a pattern of reliability in making and keeping promises, people develop trust, thus resulting in a shared common goal, satisfaction and increased productivity. Flore’s definition of management allows for openness, motivation, commitment and willingness of people to carry out their duties to their best abilities.

Lekganyane and Oosthuizen (2006) emphasized trust relationships as an important factor towards the success of projects. Keegan and Den Hartog (2004) associated the trust between a leader and his subordinates to transformational leadership. Burns (2003) defined transformational leaders as having the ability to engage their followers to achieve higher levels of morality and motivation, and apply charismatic methods to attract people to higher standards and values. Keegan and Den Hartog (2004) asserted that transformational leaders when compared to transactional leaders had subordinates who revealed satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Burns (2003) was of the view that transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership and transformational leaders encourage people corroboration rather than working as individuals. As discussed in Chapter 1, Eskom is in a process of transformational change and operating in a very competitive and dynamic environment. Currently, Eskom is faced with the challenge to build new power stations to meet the electricity demand and to build the stations under the constraints of financing, environmental requirements, climate change and job creation. Building trust relationships with employees is thus of the utmost importance in order to achieve success.

Sunindijo, et al. (2007) discussed the importance of EI which affects the leadership behavior of the project managers. Sunindijo, et al. (2007) cited Goleman (2001) who defined EI as the ability to be considerate of our own and other's feelings and motivating ourselves to properly manage our own emotions and relationships. Sunindijo, et al. (2007) argued that even though more research had been done on Intelligent Quotient (IQ), findings on EI, which was a newly studied area pointed to the importance of EI in the workplace and that studies had shown that a high IQ does not necessarily guarantee a successful life. Sunindijo, et al. (2007) cited Goleman (1995, 1998) who argued that EI was more important in determining high job performance than IQ. Similarly, Cherniss, et al. (2006) quoted Goleman (2001) who suggested that the EI competency was more appropriate than the IQ in determining potential for top positions, developing and promoting leaders. Sunindijo, et al. (2007) also supported the argument on the importance of EI by citing Carmeli (2003) who concluded that senior managers who possessed higher EI performed better at their job compared to their counterparts with lower EI. Sunindijo, et al. (2007) concluded that project managers who maintain high EIs are likely to communicate openly and have proactive leadership styles, thus conveying positive outcomes to organizations. Herrera and Bradberry (2007) stated that EI should not be ignored in a workplace as it can significantly improve both individual and group job performance and managers who have EI should exhibit self-awareness and be assertive. Müller and Turner (2007) stated that EQ contributed greatly to project success for the project situations.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991, p.58) argued that traits alone do not guarantee leadership success, but the key traits such as; "drive, leadership motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability and knowledge of the business", differentiate effective leaders from other people and also equip the leaders with the skills required to implement the organizational objectives through a vision. These traits are an advantage to the leader's capability towards leading an organization effectively and achieving set goals. In order to be successful, a leader holding these traits still requires leading by vision and setting goals.

### 2.6.3 Traits required for effective project managers

Müller and Turner (2007, p.22) quoted Turner's work (1999) which identified seven traits of effective project managers, namely, "problem solving ability, results orientation, energy and initiative, self-confidence, perspective, communication and negotiating ability".

Dolfi and Andrew's (2007) research identified the following characteristics which describe an effective project manager: recognizing the importance of planning, goal oriented, desire for accomplishments and a sense of team work (people oriented). They concluded that optimism of project managers which could be learned, was a critical quality required by project managers to overcome chaotic challenges, obstacles and changes in the working environment.

Fisher (2010) denoted that an effective project manager should have flexibility in skill and behavior to manage people in different types of projects and situations, most especially where cultural differences apply. Having such flexibility improves the success of delivery of projects. Fisher (2010) described six skills and behaviors (Table 2.3) which have been identified by practitioners as most important for effective people project managers.

**Table 2. 3 Six specific skills and behaviours of an effective people project manager**

Skill	Behaviour
Understanding behavioural characteristics	Be genuine and open and honest with others. Show openly that you believe in your team's abilities. Show an open and authentic concern for others that is based on true feelings and not on invented ones. Develop an understanding of the relationship between behaviours and feelings and how you can make this work for you in your teams. Adopt a repertoire of behaviours so you can deal with people in different situations and circumstances.
Leading others	Show a high level of motivation towards innovation to inspire others to become more creative and innovative. Adopt a leadership style that is appropriate to the situation, for example, situational, transitional, visionary or charismatic. Ensure that your team members comply with your wishes. Apply directive, firm or demanding behaviours according to the attitudes and behaviours of your team members.
Influencing others	Convince, influence or impress others in order to support their agenda, or the desire to have a specific impact or effect on others. Influence others by selling them the benefit, for example, why they should change so they can see the benefit and make the appropriate changes to their behaviour or attitude. Share with others what it feels like to work in a highly successful team so they adopt the behaviours that are associated with success. Influence team members to

	unblock the values and beliefs people have to help them develop better. Share with others what it feels like to work in a highly-valued team.
Authentizotic behavior	Show open concern for others. Accept people for what they are and do not try to force them to change. Empower people by delegating tasks to them and ask them to take on board more responsibilities. Develop an understanding of what makes the other person tick and what is important to that person. Show genuine concerns and feelings for the needs of others. Make people feel good about work, themselves, others and the project itself.
Conflict management	Establish the root causes of the conflict by talking to others openly and honestly to find out. Concentrate on the work issues and do not get personal. Show loyalty, integrity, trust, help and support when dealing with conflicts. Be tolerant and prepared to compromise. Observe behaviours of team members to sense early when conflicts begin to develop, and then take corrective actions to resolve these.
Cultural awareness	Develop, display and apply an awareness of the cultural differences of team members. Show an understanding and knowledge of the values and beliefs of other cultures. Adapt some of other people's own home country behaviours appropriate to the situation when managing people from diverse cultures. Adopt cultural awareness behaviours to manage people in their projects effectively. Show an open optimism about cultural differences and show views that confirm that you see cultural diversity as an enhancement to your own values and beliefs.

Source: Fisher (2010, p.7)

The skills and behavior described above put an emphasis on people management and good team relations. Fisher (2010) states that practitioners refer to an effective and competent project manager as having the ability to create good personal relations with their subordinates and teams, which includes among others, being a good listener, understanding people's emotions and feelings and being supportive and caring. Fisher (2010) concludes that the effectiveness of a skill is driven by the associated behavior and therefore, an effective project manager requires both the skill and the behavior to be a good people's manager.

Gehring (2007) depicts that a project manager who effectively leads a project will have the required traits and apply these traits to project management. Ogunlana, et al. (2002) conducted a study on project managers in the construction industry in Asia and found that the project manager requires different skills and capacities for different projects. They stated that these requirements make the finding of a suitable project manager for a construction project a major task in project implementation. Ogunlana, et al. (2002, p.386) quoted Gaddis (1959) as

indicating that a “successful project manager is one who possesses technical competence which has been gained through a career in advanced technology environment”. They further stated that researchers agree that project managers do not necessarily have to be technical experts, but having a technical skill in a technical discipline will add value to the projects being constructed.

## **2.7 Leadership styles**

As indicated in Table 2.1, different researchers have described different schools of leadership. Literature shows that different approaches to leadership and management are based on different assumptions and theories. Leadership style can be defined as the manner in which each individual approaches different situations by providing direction, implementing, leading, motivating and influencing people to achieve objectives. Similarly, Chapman (1975, p.647) cited Fiedler’s definition of leadership style as “the underlying need structure of the leader which motivates his behavior in various leadership situations and infers the consistency of goals or needs over different situations”. Literature states that an individual’s behavior is affected by their culture. This means that styles of leadership for individuals can be based on a combination of culture and inclinations.

### **2.7.1 Leadership behaviors**

The behavior school of leadership asserts that effective leaders acquire certain styles or behaviors suitable to different situations. Bass (1990) and Byrne and Bradley (2007) argued that the behavior of a leader determines his pattern of leadership which could change from time to time due to cultural differences and changes in situations. Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) indicated that an individual’s leadership behavior changes with different situations. They further divided the behaviors into three categories, namely; goal oriented, involving and engaging, which are defined below:

- *Goal oriented:* leader behavior which is leader-centric and non-authoritarian. The leader sets direction and directs others to accomplish goals.
- *Involving:* leader behavior which is less leader-centric, but provides a sense of direction, and is focused on engaging others in setting direction and determining how goals will be achieved.

- *Engaging*: leader behavior that focuses more on facilitating others to achieve direction, and provides the means for achieving the goals.

Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) quoted a study by Higgs & Rowland (2003) who found the facilitative leadership style (engaging) to be necessary for success. A leader-centric/directive style was found to be unsuitable and ineffective but more common and dominant in simple and uncomplicated situations.

A broad literature review on leadership behaviors required to influence people identifies the following thirteen behaviors; “visioning, inspiring, stimulating, coaching, rewarding, punishing, delegating, leading by example, sharing and open communication, listening, directing, participating and proactive” (Sunindijo, et al., 2007, p.167).

### **2.7.2 Cultural influences, gender and leadership**

Ely, et al. (2011) argued that gender prejudice in the culture has a significant impact for women leaders. International Labour Office (2004) stated that women perform a large share of household tasks and often find it difficult to balance between work and family, thus their opportunities for promotions are limited. This is a problem for women worldwide but can be intensified in more family-oriented cultures. Traditionally, the participation of men in household tasks is far less than their female partners and men have the flexibility in deciding to involve themselves more with family. Eagly and Carli (2003) stated that women are more likely to lead effectively as leaders in contemporary conditions; however they suffer to prove their level of competency as leaders in highly male dominated environments. Eagly and Carli (2003) asserts that women face gender prejudice in masculine environments impacting on their advancement and promotions.

In a male hierarchal environment, males will cling together and avoid their female counterparts. They assume that working with other men provides them with masculinity benefits which gives them more advantage over women and they are of the assumption that they are more competent than the women workers (Bird, 2003).

Byrne and Bradley (2007) found that leadership styles and manager's national culture contribute to the management and success of businesses globally. They defined national culture as: "essentially the integrated personal values of people in society and reflects aspects of their personal culture integrated in a national identity" (Byrne & Bradley, 2007, p.169).

House, et al. (1999) explained that the Global Leadership Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE) have demonstrated that cultural forces have a great impact on the leader's position and influence what leaders chose to do in their respective countries. In a dynamic world faced with increasing competition, leaders are presented with challenges that require multicultural leadership theory and research.

## **2.8 Leadership styles in projects**

Most research done has recorded leadership as essential for project success and that the temporal and changing nature of a project requires different styles of leadership that would be appropriate for different project types (Müller & Turner, 2010). Burke (2004) agreed with this notion by explaining that efficiency and success in project managers requires them to practice suitable leadership styles.

Research on relationships between leadership and project success, suggested that successful project managers need to employ flexibility in their leadership style. Flexibility allows them to adjust and apply different leadership styles that will suit changes in circumstances or situations (Prabhakar, 2005; Müller & Turner, 2007). Dolfi and Andrew's (2007) study cited Mulley and Thomas (2004) who stated that project managers who are flexible have the capability to adapt easily and successfully in a working environment. Mulley and Thomas also found that managers exhibited a strong link between the personality type and competency. Mulley and Thomas concluded that the emotional (EQ) competencies were most significant in ensuring project success.

Prabhakar (2005) stated that leaders who practice transformational leadership possess a leadership quality of 'idealized influence'. He defined 'idealized influence' as building subordinates' trust, maintaining a team's trust, motivating subordinates and showing commitment to the team. Prabhakar (2005) explained that the leader's idealized influence and



relationship-oriented approach contributes to the success of a project. Keegan and Den Hartog (2004) predicted that transformational leadership was more applicable to project managers but due to a gap in both theoretical and empirical work in the field of leadership in a project based organization, they found no significant link. However, Müller and Turner (2007, 2010) concluded that the transformational leadership style was more appropriate to complex change projects while the transactional leadership style was more appropriate to simple projects and defined transformational traits, communication and sensitivity to be equally important.

Armandi, et al. (2003) defined transformational leaders as those who, through vision, direct followers towards achieving the organization's objectives. Followers then achieve the vision through applying their knowledge and skills.

In research conducted by Mäkilouko (2004, p.387), most Finnish projects managers, (40 out of 47), reflected task oriented leadership and cultural ignorance ('ethnocentrism'). In contrast to the 40, the remaining seven demonstrated an understanding of native cultures by reflecting a leadership style that is relationship oriented ('synergistic') or both relationship and task oriented ('polycentric') and indicated cultural empathy, maintained team consistency and avoided any cross-cultural problems. Mäkilouko (2004) considers task and relationship orientation to be personality traits that are appropriate for multicultural situations. He further explains that rapid changes and challenges in the structure of projects with simultaneous tasks require both task and relationship oriented leadership styles to overcome the chaotic challenges of time and financial pressure normally existing in the different phases of the project.

A study done by Yang, et al. (2011) on the relationship between leadership styles, teamwork and project success in the Taiwanese construction industry showed that good leadership traits in the leader improve relationships among team members. The study indicated that teamwork has a major influence on project performance. The study concluded that the project type has an average effect on the relationship between teamwork and project success.

Mumford, et al. (2000) quoted by Müller and Turner (2010) stated that the manager's position can be prolonged and their performance enhanced if their personal characteristics meet the requirements of their position.

## **2.9 Comparing male and female leadership styles**

Studies on leadership tend to compare the leadership styles of men and women. Chapman (1975) stated that theoretical research has indicated the existence of relationships between sex and leadership. He stated that sex role stereotypes determine the behavior of the individual based on the sex of the individual and these are perceptions that have been perpetuated over time. When placed in leadership positions, women tend to display relationship oriented behaviors as compared to men, thus being consistent with societal expectations. He further indicated that the empirical research done by other researchers showed women to display accommodative qualities in influencing team performance towards achieving a goal. In contrast, their male counterparts displayed authoritarian qualities and sought to gain individual advantages. Chapman stated that there could be an expectation of females to be task oriented in order to succeed in a traditionally male environment.

Koch, et al. (2005) found that women were described as 'communal' - associated with being feminine and exhibiting traits such as soft, sentimental, delicate, quiet, sociable, flexible and bold. In contrast, men were described as 'agentic' - associated with masculinity and exhibiting traits such as hard, strong, healthy, robust, tense, instinctive, aggressive, dominant and egoistic.

Appelbaum, et al. (2003) found that women were higher on people oriented skills and expressed a collaborative team approach that empowers employees and customers when compared to men who were higher on business oriented skills. Powell (2011) later found that a good manager whether male or female was distinguished by stereotypical masculine characteristics, contrary to his hypothesis that a good manager would possess both masculine and feminine traits ('androgynous'). In contrast, Appelbaum, et al. (2003) found that women utilizing 'androgynous' leadership would have a better chance of rising to leadership positions. Similarly Coughlin, et al. (2005) talked about the new and the old leadership style. The new refers to feminine leadership traits (open, transparent, and caring) and is, often associated

with women and perfectly suited for leaders who listen and learn from others in order to be effective. The old style is associated with masculine leadership traits (aggressive, closed and autocratic). They argued that situations could however occur when a leader should be masculine or apply both the feminine and masculine qualities irrelevant of the gender. They stated that according to psychologist, Carl Jung, women and men are each born with the feminine and masculine side, except that one is more prominent than the other in each individual, which means that the one who is able to balance both sides is an effective leader.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) shared the same view as Coughlin, et al. (2005) and Appelbaum, et al. (2003) because although their study did not cater for the extent to which sex differences in leadership style might produce differences in the effectiveness of leaders, they stated that they were of the belief that a democratic style or autocratic style may enhance the leader's effectiveness depending on the situation.

Appelbaum, et al. (2003) compared the difference in the leadership styles between women and men, as indicated in the table below.

**Table 2.4 Comparison of female and male attributes**

Female	Male
Consideration	Structure
Transformational	Transactional
Participative	Autocratic
Socio-expressive	Instruction-giving
People-oriented	Business-oriented

*Source: Appelbaum, et al. (2003, p.48)*

The meta-analysis research by Eagly and Johnson (1990) on the leadership styles of males and females, similar to Rosener (1990), concluded that the female leadership style was more democratic (participative) than the male leadership style which was more autocratic (directive), this is in sharp contrast to Powell (2011) who reported to have found no differences in the leadership styles of women and men. Eagly and Johnson (1990) also found no differences in interpersonal and task oriented style between men and women. Eagly and Johnson (1990) further explained that recent management writing has emphasized the importance of moving away from hierarchical autocratic management to the democratic and

participative leadership style, which the meta-analysis study recommend to be more prevalent among women than men.

### **2.10 Women leadership and leadership styles**

The study by Appelbaum, et al. (2003) found that women employ transformational leadership styles and showed people oriented skills in their abilities to listen to others, show sensitivity and develop relationships in the work place. Similarly, the study of Helgesen (1990) showed that women executives strive on building relationships with their business associates. This provided them with a competitive advantage over their male counterparts. They further stated that organizations that fail to maximize the potential of their female employees miss out on the benefit that women's unique talents and ideas can bring into the organization.

The study by Parker (2001) of African black women executive leaders in a white male environment revealed a rather different result to feminine leadership characteristics which has been associated with women's transformation leadership. These women portrayed the control oriented leadership which they viewed as a necessary approach for managing their positions within the dominant culture.

Contrary to Parker (2001), Coughlin, et al. (2005) and Rosener (1990) stated that successful women had broken stereotype barriers which referred to them as not being strong and lacking leadership qualities. They had broken grounds not through the traditional style of leadership (command, control and direct) as they believed it would not gain them success, but through exhibiting feminine characteristics such as collaboration, influence, empowering and good listeners. Coughlin, et al. (2005) compared these characteristics to a '360 degree' leadership style. Rosener (1990) elaborated that in the past, the first female executives ('first generation managerial women') succeeded through adopting the masculine leadership style which proved to be successful for men. However in the current times, they ('second generation managerial women') are beginning to make an impact on organizations using their own style of leadership and making it to the top not by adopting the masculine leadership style that have proved successful for men, but by applying their own skills and attitudes achieved through their shared experiences as women. This generation has adopted the non-traditional leadership style which is better suited to sustain the organization through the ever changing and rapid

environment. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) concurred with this argument. Helgesen (1990) was also in agreement when he concluded that women managers do not have to convert to masculine qualities associated with men, but as women they have an advantage to possess feminine qualities such as responsibility, connection and inclusion, which are necessary to operate a successful and profitable business.

Rosener (1990) further explained that in a survey done, women demonstrated a characteristic of transformational leadership by being charismatic and getting subordinates to engage in team work and to have shared goals. The women also indicated an interactive leadership style in the way in which they encourage participation with others, sharing information, encourage people's confidence and energize subordinates. Rosener (1990) referred to this leadership style as being competitive in a diverse economic environment. Men on the other hand demonstrated transactional leadership, using punishment for non-performance, and using a reward system for good performance.

George (2003) described that in a manager/leader study done in health care leadership, female executives presented a management style that was relationship-oriented, collaborative and having capabilities to grow and improve the employee's skills. Such female skills were viewed as a desirable leadership styles required for balancing the culture rooted in the system.

Werhane (2007) stated that global leadership, which consists of cultural diversity challenges, requires women to exhibit collaborative behavior in their leadership style because this behavior is advantageous in multicultural organizations. Melero (2011) stated that the growth of female managers in workplaces encourages more interpersonal relations among team members and improves the management practice.

Furst and Reeves (2008) argued that women are likely to rise to leadership positions in erratic environments that are open to innovation and new ideas. In these situations, women are seen as having the potential to lead organizations because of their characteristics of openness, inclusion and expediting change.

Unnithan (1997) discussed Nancy Bancroft's (1995) book which indicated that the success of women in business meant that women had to exhibit masculine qualities, such as being strong, competent and confident, while sustaining their stereotyped feminine qualities. The book was concluded with a plea for a paradigm shift that would integrate the feminine style into the traditional male business.

### **2.11 Global representation of women in top leadership positions**

International Labour Office (2004) stated that the difficulty that women have is in acquiring executive positions at corporate levels rather than at the lower levels of hierarchy.

International Labour Office (2004) reports the following on women representation:

#### **Australia**

According to a survey of top 200 companies conducted in 2002, women held 8.2 percent of board positions in the companies with only two percent CEO's (one percent).

#### **The USA**

Survey by Catalyst in 2003 reported that women representation on the board of the fortune 500 companies was 13.6 percent and 54 companies had one women director.

#### **Canada**

Another Catalyst survey done in 2002 showed a significant increase from 3.4 percent in 1999 to 6.7 percent in 2002.

#### **European countries**

The study of female top managers in the FTSE 100 companies in 2003 showed that 18 of the 20 companies had women directors (90 percent), but there were still 32 companies out of the 100 companies that had no women director.

#### **France**

In France, women occupied only 124 of the top 2,325 positions in the top 200 companies in 2000.

## **South Africa**

In 2001, women occupied 17.7 percent of senior management positions and 11.3 percent of top management positions.

### **2.12 Representation of women in top leadership positions in South Africa**

The advancement of women to senior and top leadership positions is still very slow in South Africa, which is not only a challenge to South Africa but worldwide.

The 11th CEE Annual report (2010 – 2011) reported a workforce profile of 29.3 percent for women representation at senior management levels and a workforce profile of 19 percent for women representation at top management levels. This represents an increase of 11.6 percent and 7.7 percent respectively since 2001.

### **2.13 Representation of women in management position at Eskom**

**Table 2. 5 Employment equity report -November 2010**

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
	African	Coloured	Indian	white	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female	
Top Management	5	1	4	6	2	1	1	1	0	0	21
Senior management	76	13	43	182	40	12	18	22	18	3	427
Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management	1469	287	412	1477	1024	112	158	370	148	44	5501
Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foreman, and superintendents	6019	911	429	3701	4474	498	304	1246	138	64	17784
<b>Total for Management</b>	<b>7569</b>	<b>1212</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>5366</b>	<b>5540</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1639</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>23733</b>
Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making	8686	1006	61	521	1628	274	80	745	41	20	13062
Unskilled and defined decision making	17	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	23
<b>Total Permanent</b>	<b>16272</b>	<b>2218</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>5889</b>	<b>7170</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>2384</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>36818</b>
Temporary employees	54	4	2	26	54	4	4	14	1	2	165
<b>Total</b>	<b>16326</b>	<b>2222</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>5915</b>	<b>7224</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>2398</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>36983</b>

Source: Eskom Holdings Ltd Employment Equity report (2010, p.3)

The information above is an extract from the Employment Equity report that was submitted by Eskom Holdings Ltd as at 30 November 2010. This is the report submitted annually to the Department of Labour as a requirement to monitor if companies are achieving equity in the workplace.

The table reflects that at the end of November 2010, Eskom Holding Ltd had 36,983 employees of which 30 percent were females and 70 percent were males. In the category of the 21 top management positions, five (24 percent) were occupied by females and 16 (76 percent) occupied by males. Of 427 senior management positions, 95 (22 percent) were occupied by



females and 332 (78 percent) occupied by males. The same with middle management where out of the 5,501 positions, 1,708 (31 percent) were occupied by women and 3,793 (69 percent) occupied by men and in junior management, of the 17,784 positions, 6,586 (37 percent) were occupied by women and 11,198 (63 percent) occupied by men.

Table 2.6 below further represents the breakdown of females in different management categories

**Table 2. 6 Breakdown of females in different management categories**

Occupational Levels	Female	Male
Male vs. female representation	30	70
Top Management	24	76
Senior management	22	78
Middle-management	31	69
Junior management	37	63

Source: Eskom Holdings Ltd Employment Equity report (2010, p.3)

In all the management categories represented, the statistics reflect a high representation of men. The figures confirm a low representation of women in all the spheres of the organization.

The table below compares the 2004 equity statistics for women quoted by Govender (2005) to the 2010 equity statistics.

**Table 2. 7 Comparison of 2004 equity statistics to 2010 equity statistics**

Occupational levels	2004 Female percentage	2010 Female percentage	Improvement percentage
Female representation	22	30	8
Top Management	12	24	12
Senior management	21	22	1
Middle-management	21	31	10
Junior management	30	37	7

Source: Eskom Holdings Ltd Employment Equity report (2010, p.3) and Govender (2005, p.66)

The table shows a slight improvement in transformation and presents evidence that Eskom Holdings has paid more attention but the figures are still far from a well-balanced gender represented organization. More effective initiatives still have to be implemented to get to that level and it is up to Eskom to pay more attention to transforming from a male dominated

environment into a much more balanced representation. There is still a lot of initiative and hard work needed in order to get to that level.

#### **2.14 Barriers that prevent the advancement of women to top leadership positions**

Literature has identified the following as preventing the advancement of women to top management/leadership positions:

- Sex role orientation
- Gender stereotyping
- Glass ceiling
- Family responsibilities

##### **2.14.1 Sex role orientation**

Sex role orientation refers to the allocation of certain characteristics and skills based on the sex identification of being male or female (Pleck, 1985 cited by Chugh & Sahgal, 2007; Powell, 2011). Powell (2011) used the term – ‘gender stereotype’ for the same definition. Chapman (1975) argued that the societal and cultural expectations encompassing men and women leads to certain gender stereotypes emerging for both men and women. These stereotypes can influence their personality development and behavioral patterns. Gender which may be confused with the individual’s sex is defined by CGE (2000) and Powell (2011) as ‘cultural’ and ‘social’, while sex is biological. Biology separates males from females by their characteristics. Women give birth and men do not. CGE (2000) states that gender is culturally based, with society expecting certain characteristics from an individual based on their gender. The expectations include defining women and men’s type of work, opportunities, social status and behavior, to name a few. Some characteristics which are defined by society include women being subordinates to men, submissive, powerless, and having fewer opportunities and more limited resources than men. Sex role orientation can be compared to the cultural inhibitions which are described by Glenn and Gordon (2001 p.267) as “inconsistencies or conflicts in the systems of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that people use to cope with their world and with one another”. People therefore make decisions based on what is in line with their culture. Most cultures associate masculine qualities such as, ‘dominant’, ‘aggressive’ to masculine and feminine qualities such as ‘passive’ and ‘dependent’ to females (Moran, 1992;

Chugh & Sahgal, 2007). Culture also links female communal orientation traits such as warm, expressive and emotional. Males reflect competencies of decision making and business skill traits (Chugh & Sahgal, 2007; Moran 1992).

CGE (2000) argues that the social construction of gender makes it 'dynamic'. The social beliefs are not natural, they can be changed. With so much change taking place, societies need to adjust. This change will require gender roles which differ from society to society to be challenged. Stereotyping does not have to be accepted.

Culture has influenced society to assume that leadership is always for men and not for women. Different authors refer to social sex and/or sex roles or gender roles whilst others refer to gender stereotype or sex role orientation. For the purposes of clarity in this research the terms with similar meanings will be used interchangeably.

Powell (2011, p.2) defines gender role as "consisting of beliefs about what societal roles are appropriate for members of each sex".

#### **2.14.2 Gender stereotyping on leadership**

Studies on the comparisons between male and female leadership styles mostly highlight societal perceptions as having a major influence on gender stereotyping which have an impact on the behavior of women and men. Chapman's (1975) study on male and female leadership styles was motivated by the growth of females in leadership positions throughout American industry and government. He argued that because sex differences in leadership have the complexity of societal expectations and cultural elements, this presents uniqueness to the management field. Although Chapman's study dates back to three and a half decades, he elicits the same patterns of gender stereotyping echoed in studies conducted by recent researchers.

Moran (1992) explained that gender differences in leadership styles have been the most strongly studied topics in the area of leadership in the past two decades. This has been motivated by the need to gain an understanding of whether differences in leadership styles could answer the question of why there have been few women leaders, especially women

advancing to top positions, even though there were a large number of women in the workforce. Moran (1992) cited a study done by Denmark (1977) who argued that sex role stereotypes contributed to the dearth of women in leadership positions. Moran (1992) argued that even though women are assuming leadership roles today, the acceptance of women leaders to many individuals is still difficult. Moran cited Bass (1991) who stated that previously in female organizations such as convents and female institutions, leadership positions such as Presidents and Priests have always been assumed by men. Moran's study concluded that women's leadership styles are different to men's, but this should not restrict men from learning and adopting those leadership styles. Moran (1992) predicted that with more women assuming leadership roles, a time would come where cultural and sex role stereotypes would diminish and leaders would be recognized for their different leadership styles without linking them to their gender. Men and women would display leadership skills that would be effective to future organizations.

In their research, motivated by a significant under-representation of women in today's senior corporate positions, Appelbaum, et al. (2003) detected that even though women account for 51 percent of the population and 46.5 percent of the labor force, their presence at more senior corporate levels is poorly represented. Moran (1992) argued that because biology assumes leadership to be innate for men, this implies that because women are not male, they lack leadership qualities required to be leaders. Moran (1992) further pointed out that the assessment of women's leadership styles as less effective has been driven by society's perception and is not fact based.

Koch, et al. (2005) argued that in the western world women in the leading positions are still very much under-represented as compared to university graduation numbers and this is applicable to different fields of study.

Moran (1992) argued that despite attempts, such as affirmative action to increase the number of women in leadership, the existence of traditional stereotypes still remains a major influence and continues to hinder women in leadership, most especially with society struggling to accept women leaders. In order for women to be accepted as leaders, they have to be extremely competent and have working experience demonstrating a track record of their

accomplishments and be over prepared for their new role. They are expected to behave like men, rather than bring in new ideas and talent to the new roles (Shavlik & Touchtom, 1988 cited in Moran, 1992).

Powell (2011) noted that when it comes to leader preferences across the globe, employees still tend to prefer male managers over female managers. Powell (2011) listed three reasons for this preference. The first reason was due to the stereotype suggesting that leaders can only be efficient if they exhibit masculine qualities linked with men - 'independence', 'decisiveness' and 'aggressiveness' rather than feminine qualities linked with women - nurturance, compassion and sensitivity towards others. He argued that leadership stereotypes which associate masculine traits for best leadership can expose women to awkward positions which could put them at a disadvantage in terms of leader and gender roles. The first reason occurs when they demonstrate mostly feminine characteristics, then they are seen as not compatible for leadership roles; however if they demonstrate masculine characteristics to a great extent, they fail to meet the requirements of the female gender role (beliefs on what is appropriate for 'communal roles') which associate females with being nice and respectful. This could have an impact in terms of women's motivation for higher leadership positions. The second reason was due to the discrimination of women leaders, resulting in reduced desirability for leadership. Lastly, the differences in behaviors between men and women, favors men's behavior, which is believed to improve the financial status for organizations and satisfied subordinates.

#### **2.14.3 Glass ceiling**

Glass ceiling is defined as the inhibitor that prevents women's advancement to top leadership positions in organizations across the world (Moran, 1992; Chugh & Sahgal, 2007; Furst & Reeves, 2008; Fain, 2011). Even though women are competent in terms of experience and education, they still encounter the glass ceiling effect in today's workplaces (Hoobler, et al., 2009). Hoobler, et al. (2009) stated that research on the glass ceiling effect has indicated that lack of mentors for women gender stereotyping and perceptions associating masculinity with effective leadership are some of the examples inhibiting women's advancement. Their study suggested that the bosses' perceptions on work - family conflict of the female subordinates'

compared to the actual work – family conflict could explain the reason for fewer promotions of females.

The Organization Catalyst Report (1995-2005) cited in Fain (2011) stated that there is a small percentage of female corporate officers in Fortune 500 companies and attributed the slow progress of advancement of women to gender stereotyping, segregation of women from informal networks and the absence of role models for aspiring female managers. In a study to determine the speed of advancing women to balance gender in an organization, Fain (2011) found that actual advancement progress to balance management positions can still occur slowly in the absence of such barriers. The results of the study indicated that the lower positions achieve gender balance quicker than the higher positions. This led to the conclusion that while discriminating practices could slow the advancement progress, removing them does not guarantee a quicker advancement as there are other factors that could still derail progress.

#### **2.14.4 Family responsibilities**

Research done on the limited numbers of women executives stated that women lacked a desire to take up opportunities for career advancement because they had responsibilities to take care of their families (George, 2003; International Labour Office, 2004). They were doubtful to take on the challenge because they felt that they could not cope with balancing the demands of the executive positions and taking care of their families. This was applicable to both single and married mothers (George, 2003).

#### **2.15 Women leadership and general challenges encountered by women in leadership positions**

Kass, et al's (2006, p.186) study on senior female surgical leaders found that women who against all odds of gender prejudice had advanced to leadership positions had to overcome barriers such as 'lack of mentor effectiveness', 'gender discrimination', 'traditional sexism of male dominated culture', 'limited job opportunities' and a 'hostile environment'. Most female leaders identified personal qualities such as perseverance, drive and strong work ethic as critical success factors. Most importantly, good communication, determination, commitment and learned skills across different discipline areas together with individual drive over personal growth and career were recommended as overcoming barriers and advancing in the surgical

field. In a working environment, women are naturally not recognized as equal to men, which is why in most instances, they have to work twice as hard to prove their competency. Quite often they tend to convert to the masculine characteristics as mechanism to fit in but still get excluded when networking sessions are conducted in a male dominated environment. These sessions are essential to their career development. Furthermore, women are not entrusted with the more demanding positions which could improve their careers (International Labour Office, 2004).

## **2.16 Summary**

Leadership is reported to be essential for project success. The literature covers a large spectrum of different topics and theories by different authors.

As it has been noted, project managers have the responsibility for implementing changes in organizations. They meet these objectives through delivering projects within a specified time, cost and budget, and through leading and influencing subordinates.

Various leadership traits have been identified as critical for project success and others as relevant for effective project leadership.

The behavior of project managers determines their leadership style. The success of a project manager depends on the flexibility of a leader to apply leadership styles that will suit different projects and situations. The leadership style of an individual is affected by their behavior.

Literature has identified gender stereotyping, sex role orientation, glass-ceiling and family responsibilities as critical barriers preventing the growth and development of women to higher levels of leadership positions.

Research has shown that leadership styles mostly refer back to gender stereotyping which has been caused by societal and cultural expectations. These stereotypes have a major influence on the behavior of males and females. Research shows that female qualities/characteristics have been associated with women by culture. Collaborative, democratic, relationship/people oriented, and transformational leadership have been recommended for the rapidly changing

environments. These traits have been identified as the leadership qualities required for projects and organizational success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

While the previous chapter focused on reviewing literature on leadership, this chapter will describe the research methodology that has been applied in the study, including the data collection and data analysis.

### **3.2 Research design/methodology**

Research methodology is the process that determines how research questions will be answered. These research questions determine the approach to be applied, information to be gathered and the data to be analyzed (Hayhow & Stewart, 2006; Blanche, et al., 2007).

### **3.3 Research methods**

Ghuri and Grønhaug (2002) state that research methods refer to the systematic collection of data in which information is extracted to answer a research question. The research methods can be in the form of a qualitative or quantitative research method. Borrego, et al. (2009) states that no research method is preferred over the other but the choice is entirely dependent on the research question.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative method**

Ghuri and Grønhaug (2002) refer to qualitative research as being interpretivist and constructivist where the researcher applies his skills and knowledge to analyze the data.

Smeyers (2008) and Nichollas (2009) refer to qualitative research as data collected based on people's experiences, feelings and needs. Nichollas (2009) argues that the qualitative approach brings out the individuality in people, by defining the individual's different experiences which give a meaning to the world. Olds, et al. (2005) as cited in Borrego, et al. (2009) suggests that qualitative research can be in the form of interviews, surveys, focus groups, and observations, amongst others. Qualitative methods can be applicable to research questions beginning with what, why and how (Borrego, et al., 2009).

### **3.3.2 Quantitative method**

Smeyers (2008) stated that quantitative research uses statistics to explain the data obtained from the characteristic variables. Wisker (2001) explained that the data is then used to produce a new hypothesis based on the data collected about different variables. Quantitative research assumes that people are the same and therefore conclusions are based on bigger groups (Nichollas, 2009).

### **3.4 Method of data collection**

An in-depth interview is a qualitative method which explores the participants' perceptions on the research topic and encourages people to share their views, experiences and ideas. In the in-depth interviews, the interviewer wants to learn as much as possible from the interviewee and therefore, the interviewer is considered to be a learner receiving all the knowledge from the interviewee (Milena, et al., 2008).

The research looked into establishing an understanding of the leadership styles of women project managers which meant focusing on the human aspect of behavior and characteristics by investigating individual experiences, opinions and perceptions.

A qualitative approach was therefore more suitable for data collection. Qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews was used to conduct the research. Ethical clearance (Appendix 3) for the study was obtained.

A total of 15 interviews were conducted with women project managers at EED in three NBPs, namely, Medupi, Kusile and Ingula power stations. Fourteen of those were conducted face to face; only one was conducted telephonically because of the difficulty in meeting to conduct a face to face interview due to the distance and non-availability of the participant. Wisker (2001) stated that semi-structured interviews allow for the same questions to be asked in each interview. The benefit of this type of interview is that a conversation and interaction occurs between the interviewer and the interviewee. The same questions are asked and responses can be compared on the same level. This makes it easy to transcribe, compare and analyze the data. The interviews were conducted between 12 August and 30 August 2011. The interview

sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. A digital recorder was used to record all interviews and all interviews were transcribed to facilitate data analysis.

### **3.5 Ethical issues**

Respondents were requested to complete the Informed Consent forms (Appendix 2) which outlined the aims and objectives of the research, and their right to refuse or withdraw for the project at any time with no negative consequence. An opportunity to ask questions about participating in the study was also allowed. Each of the respondents was requested for permission to use a digital recorder. All the respondents were comfortable with the use of a recorder. In order to protect the identity of the respondents, the researcher opted to use codes instead of the respondents' own names in the data presentation and analysis. The researcher has deliberately left out information about the power stations where the project managers are engaged in order to protect the identity of the respondents.

The advantage of conducting interviews is that the participants are comfortable with discussing delicate issues which otherwise cannot be discussed openly in a group (Milena, et al., 2008).

### **3.6 Validity**

The qualitative method was suited to the research question and it addressed the research questions. Because this was a perceptual study, people's opinions were important and the qualitative method allowed for the interaction with the women project managers to collect the data which was mostly influenced by their emotions, feelings and circumstances. In order to ensure validity, the same questions were asked with the interviewees and responses compared on the same level.

There are some factors that reduce the validity. In this research, data could only be gathered from one method of data collection and therefore, the results were not sufficiently validated. Testing the perceived leadership styles against the actual styles has been recommended for future studies.

### **3.7 Reliability**

The weakness about qualitative research is that it relies on people's emotions, perceptions, circumstances, experiences and so forth. For that reason one cannot necessarily expect exactly the same answers as they are influenced by an individual's perceptions at that moment which are influenced by circumstances at that time.

### **3.8 Did the design answer the research questions?**

The qualitative research design used was appropriate. From the start this project was not looking for measuring variables as is the case in quantitative research. It was about looking into people's experiences and perceptions. Wisker (2001) states that the title of the research should provide enough scope to answer the research questions, and the research questions should not be excessively complex. The title of the research provided enough scope to ask research questions. Research questions were carefully structured and the questions were answered adequately. The data was easily acquired and analyzed.

### **3.9 Sampling method**

The study was based on the leadership styles deployed by women project managers and the selection criteria for the qualitative research was what is described by Nichollas (2009) as 'purposive' sampling whereby participants are sampled according to their willingness to talk and share their experiences and can offer meaningful contributions into what is being studied.

The selection was as much as possible women project managers across different departments to ensure representation in different disciplines.

Interviews were scheduled telephonically for all the participants, thus allowing the participants freedom to ask any questions pertaining to the research. Prior to the interview, the participants were allowed time to ask any questions and the consent form was read out and given to the participants. The interviews were conducted in English.

The plan was initially to get an even distribution of representation across all three power stations which meant five women per power station but due to challenges of accessing project managers, more women were available at Medupi power station, as compared to Kusile and

Ingula power stations. The Medupi project managers were easy to access even though on the day of the scheduled interview, one woman could not be interviewed because she fell sick and the interview had to be rescheduled for another day. The Kusile women were not very easy to access, however assistance was received from two project managers who helped with the contacts and scheduling for the interviews. Seven women were scheduled for interviews at Kusile but one of them, although keen to participate in the interview, withdrew from the interview. She stated that she was not comfortable and did not have enough knowledge in the area of project management to answer the questions. In total seven women were interviewed from Medupi, six from Kusile power station and two from Ingula. The scheduling of the interviews was a challenging exercise as the appointments had to be moved due to women project managers having other commitments and three of the interviews were re-scheduled for late in the night. The main challenge was to conduct interviews in a quiet place to cater for uninterrupted recording. This meant that interviews could not be conducted at public places such as restaurants, etc. This added another challenge because it reduced the flexibility of meeting at a common point for both the interviewee and the interviewer. The interviews were in all cases held at the interviewee's place or working area which meant a lot of long distance driving.

### **3.10 Research questions**

The research questions were kept in mind when formulating the interview questions.

**Table 3. 1 Demographical information of the respondents**

Demographical information of the respondents						
Participant	Position	Department	Qualifications	No. of years at Eskom	No. of years in current position	Total no. of years as a project manager
R 1	Project Manager	Electrical	National diploma electrical engineering - heavy current	6.5	1.6	6.5
R 2	Project Manager	Turbine	B-Tech mechanical engineering	9	0.5	3.4
R 3	Project Manager	Balance of Plant	BSc civil engineering	4	2	4
R 4	Project Manager	Balance of Plant	Bachelor's degree civil engineering technology	2.5	1.6	1.6
R 5	Project Manager	Materials Handling	National diploma mechanical engineering	4	4	4
R 6	Project Manager	Finance	B-Com honours accounting	15	3	5
R 7	Project Manager	Safety, Health & Environment	B-Tech environmental Health	12	3.4	8.4
R 8	Project Manager	Boiler	National diploma analytical chemistry	17	3.4	3.4
R 9	Project Manager	Project support	National diploma analytical chemistry	12	1.7	6.2
R 10	Project Manager	Balance of Plant	B-Tech mechanical engineering	9	2.1	3.1
R 11	Project Manager	Turbine	B-Tech in civil engineering	4	4	4
R 12	Project Manager	Finance	B-Com accounting	10	5	5
R 13	Project Manager	Materials Handling	National diploma mechanical engineering	8	3	3
R 14	Project Manager	Turbine	BSc mechanical engineering	6	3	3
R 15	Project Manager	Water treatment	BSc chemistry	8	3	6

### 3.11 Interview questions analysis

The interview questions are attached in Appendix 1.

### 3.12 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to interpret and analyze the data which had been transcribed from the audio into a readable format.

Thematic analysis is a method for classifying and examining patterns gathered within data. Thematic analysis offers flexibility and seeks to establish themes presented in the research. Ryan and Bernard (2003) explain that thematic analysis plays an essential role in qualitative analysis and further state that themes are used to link different expressions, for example expressions from writings.

Ryan and Bernard (2003) described the four steps involved in thematic analysis as determining themes and subthemes, selecting the important themes, forming theme pyramids and linking themes into theoretic models. They further explained that themes generated from the data and from knowledge relating to the topic being studied can only be determined once all the data has been analyzed. The techniques of analyzing the data include transcribed interview data and identifying repeated concepts as themes or any concepts that constitute a theme in which the researcher would decide. The themes could also build from similarities and differences from the gathered data.

### **3.13 Description of research site**

Due to the lack of resources and skills in South Africa to build new power stations speedily and under several constraints, one of them being finances and the other being time, Eskom formed partnerships with other entities so that they can get funding to build the Medupi and Kusile Power Stations. The Ingula Power Station is however fully funded by Eskom.

#### **3.13.1 Background on NBPs partnerships**

##### **i. Medupi:**

Initially PB Power was contracted to manage the design of the plant via third party consultants for the project, but at a later stage PB Power was embraced as partners to Eskom in Medupi project to fulfill the requirements of an International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) based contract. The design/engineering function was then taken over by Generation Business Engineering (GBE). This created a clash of responsibility as most third party consultants are still contracted under PB Power e.g. Arcuss GIBB, SRK etc (Eskom intranet, 2010).

PB Power is an international organization with corporate branches in UK, USA and Canada. Most of PB personnel deployed at Medupi are not PB staff employees, but third party contractors recruited by PB for the project. These third party employees are not even familiar with PB's own policies and procedures, which makes it very difficult to understand and adhere to Eskom/project processes and procedures. All of the PB employees are brought in to the project as experts/subject matter specialists, which make it very difficult for them to learn and adopt new processes and procedures developed for the project. They tend to insist on practicing what they have learned and used from their individual backgrounds. This complicates the diversity of the project in terms of background and culture that needs to be integrated and controlled for the success of the project.

**ii. Kusile:**

Black and Veatch (B&V) were brought in to the Kusile Project as advising partners to Eskom personnel and were given full responsibility of designs and Engineering control in the project. Although GBE is still responsible for reviewing and accepting the designs, B&V have full control of the design processes.

Seventy percent of B&V staff deployed to Kusile Projects is core B&V staff transferred from different parts of the world and from different types of project. The magnitude of diversity is not different from that of Medupi.

**iii. Ingula:**

Ingula is managed by Eskom and Eskom contracted employees (mostly Eskom's ex-employees). The design and management of the project is in full control of Eskom and follows the normal Eskom Processes and procedures in management of contract in the New Engineering Contract (NEC).

### **3.14 Summary**

The research methodology that was chosen for the study was qualitative. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The interviews were in-depth and afforded the researcher an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the interviewee's experiences, feelings, perceptions and emotions, thus providing the richness of the data. The semi structured



interviews also provided a platform for conversation and interaction between the interviewer and interviewee and the open ended questions provided the interviewee with the flexibility to clarify questions and misunderstandings. While other methods of collecting data exist, such as focus groups and observations which could have been applied in the project, especially for the validation of data, they could not be used. The focus groups could not be used due to the participants which were in three different power stations and available at different times. Observations could not be used due to the distances between the three power stations and the limited time that the researcher had to complete the research.

Disadvantages of using only one method of data collection included totally relying on the perceptions and views pertaining to leadership styles of women project managers, but not testing the perceived leadership styles against the actual styles. This has been recommended as one of the points for future studies.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research design utilized in this project in order to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 turns to the presentation and analysis of findings. Different aspects that are associated with the leadership styles of women project managers were identified in the questions and the issues discussed in the interviews. The leadership style theme forms the main objective for this research. In addition to the main theme, five different themes emerged from the data.

#### 4.1.1 Theme 1: Leadership styles

A number of sub-themes emerged within the broader theme of leadership style. These sub-themes include characteristics such as being a decision-maker, flexible, goal oriented, open, motivator, leading by example, having a vision and being self-driven, as well as exhibiting leadership behaviors such as communication/providing clear direction, being on top of the game, people oriented, developing others, listening, continuing to learn from other people and having a high work ethics (integrity).

##### a) Characteristics

##### i. Decision-maker

The project manager's characteristic of being a decision-maker emerged strongly in the interviews. It was emphasized that a leader must be capable of making decisions timeously and quickly.

*... It definitely has to be somebody who is able to make decisions and take decisions within a short period of time. (R2)*

A lack of decision making appeared to have a negative impact towards the progress of the work in a project. Respondents stressed the importance of making a decision whether right or wrong. It was also highlighted that failure to make decisions could have a cost implication to the company.

*But when it comes to it you need to be able to make decisions, you know, Project Management is such that the stagnation or people tend to take longer to make decisions ... but indecisiveness for me is really what kills a lot of work. (R10)*

The participants pointed out the impact of failing to make a decision on the job – that it slows down progress and reduces the momentum. The participants also explained that project managers should be brave enough to make decisions whether right or wrong, as long as they are in a position to stand by those decisions and should the decision go the wrong way, they are still in a position to rectify.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) quoted decision making as one of the important cognitive abilities needed by an effective leader. Project managers are not only required to make decisions, but they have to make decisions quickly. It was pointed out in the interviews that lack of decision making can slow down the project. Projects are dependent on schedule, cost, quality and performance. Working in a project environment requires a project manager that is able to make decisions whenever required.

The project managers interviewed seem to have embraced making decisions as a requirement of project management and it seems like they are quite comfortable with making decisions quickly. The project managers interviewed showed that they have an ability to make decisions and are coping well with the pressure to make decisions quickly.

## **ii. Flexible**

The participants expressed that different situations require different leadership styles and that the project manager needs to be in a position to adjust her leadership style to suit changes in the environment.

*You are flexible because in a project environment things are not the same, things are changing so you need to change ... you cannot say I am coming with this certain type of leadership because the situation is different every day, so it calls for different leadership for different engagement. (R6)*

A respondent elaborated on her abilities to adjust her leadership styles to suit the different people that she deals with or manages. She emphasized the importance of understanding the people that she works with so that she can change her leadership style to suit the individual.

*Leadership style, I think you need a bit of – it depends on who you're dealing with. I don't have a rigid style ... but depending on the person that I deal with because first and foremost, I need to know each individual so that I know how to manage that. (R9)*

Fisher (2010) described an effective project manager as having flexibility in skill and behavior to manage people in different types of projects, most especially where cultural differences apply. In the same light, Lekganyane and Oosthuizen (2006) stated flexibility as one of the traits necessary for successful leadership, however from their study, one of the findings was that flexibility was listed as a less dominant trait among the leaders that were sampled and it was noted that the trait required more attention on the part of leaders. This study also shows that flexibility is an important trait and what came out strongly is that project managers should be flexible to suit the changing environment and that they should be able to adjust their leadership style to suit the different behaviors and characteristics of the individuals that they manage. This finding is in agreement with the findings of other studies (Prabhakar, 2005; Müller & Turner, 2007; Lekganyane & Oosthuizen, 2006) which suggested that successful project managers need to employ flexibility in their leadership style. The dynamics in the project environment requires a project manager that will adjust to suit different situations.

### **iii. Goal oriented**

Participants explained that successful project managers need to be goal oriented. Being goal oriented means that they know where they are going and understand the importance of starting and finishing a task within the resources allocated. Accomplishing goals is integral to project management. Meredith and Mantel (1995) and PMBOK guide (2004) state that project management is about accomplishing a goal. This requires a goal oriented project manager who will coordinate and integrate all the activities required to accomplish a goal within a specified time, cost, quality and performance through the project's lifecycle. This research points to the importance of goal orientation as a characteristic for successful project managers. Accomplishing a goal requires that a project manager fully comprehends the objectives of the

project. Goal orientation contributes to the success of the project and ultimately to the success of the project manager. Success could present opportunities for promotions to higher positions in the organization.

#### **iv. Open**

Openness was described as an important characteristic which allows room for improvement and growth.

*Somebody who is open to listen to criticism so that they can improve. (R9)*

Project management requires openness in behavior and in the way that the managers lead their people. The literature review describes project managers who exhibit openness as having the behavior required for effective project management. The manager's openness is shown in their ability to openly believe in their team's abilities, openness about their feelings and concern for others, talking to others openly and honestly, and being open to others about cultural differences (Fisher, 2010). Sunindijo, et al. (2007) defined open communication as one of the leadership behaviors required to influence people.

A volatile project environment requires open project managers who exhibit the behaviors explained above. The women project managers interviewed pointed out that they value openness as a leadership trait and that they practice openness with their team members. This finding is in agreement with Furst and Reeves (2008) who found that through their ability of openness amongst others, women had the potential to rise to leadership positions and lead organizations in volatile environments.

#### **v. Motivator**

The participants stressed the importance of motivating people in a project since projects are delivered by people and the success of the project depends on their performance. A respondent emphasized that motivated staff are driven to perform to their utmost level.

*Being a project manager you depend a lot on other people for your projects to continue. So, you need to be able to motivate people to deliver. Because their*

*performance means that your project succeeds ... you know motivating them, to do their best. (R12)*

Being a motivator links very well to the task of the project manager, which Armandi, et al. (2003) and Sunindijo, et al. (2007) described as a leader that motivates people to ensure that the organization's objectives and deliverables are met. Project managers with this quality are likely to be successful as compared to project managers who lack this quality. Howell, et al. (2004) contrasted transformational leadership to managing by command and control which he argued does not encourage trust, therefore failing to demonstrate a pattern of reliability, team work and motivated staff.

This study shows that the project managers understand that they cannot achieve success on their own if people are not motivated.

The managers that were interviewed seem to have the right approach to their employees because it is really the approach of the managers that determines the way that employees behave. Having motivated employees means high morale and ultimately high production levels and good performance. This finding corroborates the idea espoused by Bass (1990) who stated that it is the manager's influence on the satisfaction and performance that determines the success or failure of organizations. Employee satisfaction leads to positive behavior towards their managers which in turn results in the performance of the team.

The participants expressed leading by example, being self-driven and having a vision as characteristics for successful project managers.

**vi. Leading by example**

*... People look up to you in an organization like Eskom, so you lead by example and if you don't set your ground rules in the beginning it's going to be very difficult to lead ... (R4)*

Project managers have a task to lead people and influence them to achieve a task. When people are led, they look up to the person leading them. There is a saying; practice what you

preach. Therefore, a leader cannot expect people to behave in ways that the leader cannot. People will lose respect and confidence in a leader that does not practice what they say. Whatever behaviors that one expects from people, one has got to live up to them. The participants expressed the importance of leading by example as one of the characteristics for successful project managers. The literature review indicated leading by example as one of the leadership behaviors required to influence people (Sunindijo, et al., 2007).

#### **vii. Vision**

A vision is about seeing the bigger picture of things and giving focus and direction to people in terms of the project's objectives, therefore visionary leaders are imaginative and are able to predict things before they happen.

*Change the attitude, you won't force a person to learn but if you can get the attitude right and explain the vision and for people to understand where you are coming from, where are we going, what we are trying to achieve, then we will get it right. (R8)*

The literature refers to the school of visionary and charismatic leadership which was developed in the 1980s. This school introduced amongst others transformational leadership in which vision orientation is one of the characteristics of transformational leaders. Vision is listed as one of the 15 leadership competencies (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003 as cited in Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) state that leaders are required to lead by vision in order to effectively achieve the goals set by organizations. It is also indicated that even though the leader may have the traits which differentiate them from other people, and which benefit them in their capability towards leading, they still require leading by vision in order to be successful. Vision oriented leaders lead clearly and confidently because they know where they come from and where they are going. They therefore provide clear direction to the people that they lead. They think ahead and detect problems from afar and are able to implement mitigation plans to reduce the impact of challenges. Ultimately, project management is about working to achieve a goal. Projects require visionary leaders who are proactive, not reactive and who can direct people towards achieving the project's objective. It is clear from this study that the women interviewed are driven by vision and they explain the vision to their team

members so that they start understanding where they are coming from and where they are going, in order for their attitude to change positively towards achieving a goal.

**viii. Self-driven**

The participants stated that in order to drive people, project managers have to be capable of driving themselves.

A project manager that is self-driven shows energy and interest in their work and this can easily motivate people to also drive themselves and perform better. The women project managers interviewed listed self-driven as one of the important characteristics for a successful project manager. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) described drive as one of the traits that differentiates effective leaders from nominal leaders. They further stated that this trait contributes to the leader's capability in leading an organization effectively and to achieving set goals.

**b) Behaviors**

**i. Communication/clear direction**

The majority of respondents strongly expressed the importance of communication which gives clear direction.

The participants explained that one of the ways to direct people is to communicate their roles, requirements and expectations prior to starting to work with their subordinates. Continuous communication through regular meetings is necessary so that people are always engaged and understand their tasks and goals. These meetings include discussions such as progress of the work, milestones, difficulties and challenges on the job. The subordinates are also given an opportunity to express their views. The participants believe that when the project managers communicate this way, subordinates understand their roles and objectives, and can work independently and deliver within time, cost and quality, all of which contribute to the success of the object.



*In every project, communication is important. I guess continuous communication, continuous push, you know to get the results that one wants; that it's a winning recipe.*  
(R5)

Communication plays a vital role in project management and it has been listed as one of the eight project management knowledge areas (PMBOK guide, 2004). Engaging communication is listed as one of the 15 leadership competencies. Turner and Müller (2007) quote Turner's work (1999) conducted at Henley Management College which identified communication as one of the seven traits of effective project managers and a broad literature review on leadership behaviors has suggested communication as a requirement to influence people (Sunindijo, et al., 2007).

Communication was expressed very strongly in the interviews. The participants showed an understanding for the importance of engaging their subordinates and they understood that projects are delivered by people. They explained that one way to direct people is to clearly communicate the tasks and objectives prior to starting work. The managers explained that engaging people through communication is important in a project because projects are delivered by people and therefore the objectives should be clear and one way of directing people is through clear communication. The women project managers interviewed encourage two-way communication where subordinates also express their opinions. The managers emphasized that the only way to succeed, that is, achieving the goal within time, cost and quality is to continuously communicate with the team members, keep people on the same wavelength and to ensure that they understand the project objectives. This finding supports previous research in the study of senior female surgical leaders where good communication was recommended as one of the characteristics for overcoming barriers and advancing in the surgical field (Kass, et al., 2006).

## **ii. On top of the game**

The participants specified being on top of the game as a crucial behavior in the success of a project manager because it means that the project manager is ahead of everyone else and knows everything going on in their discipline. This ensures preparedness for any challenge and can also earn the project manager respect from other people.

*As a woman if you stand there and you are not sure, you are opening yourself up for millions and millions of bullets. You need to be on top of your game, you need to plan, you need to read, and you need to listen ... (R7)*

In order to be effective, project managers need to understand their projects well; in terms of the schedule, cost and quality. This means that they need to be on top of the game. The women project managers regarded being on top of the game as an imperative behavior in the success of project managers. They emphasized the importance of knowing everything in their discipline from bottom to top as it meant they were knowledgeable of their work and this could also earn them respect from other people.

### **iii. People oriented**

The majority of respondents attributed a people oriented leader to be necessary for the success of a project. There was a particular emphasis to understand people, take care of people and their needs. The respondents' demonstrated people oriented skills through the following.

#### **a) Strong working teams**

The importance of creating strong working teams, to get optimum results needs to be understood because it is through leading teams that deliveries of the project are met.

*... You constantly communicate what you expect from every team player, you know. It has somehow helped for people to understand that it is about the team rather than an individual that wants to make it ... (R5)*

A view that was highlighted when working in a team was that project managers need not only focus on the decisions that impact their project, but also consider the impact that their decisions will have on the overall project.

Another view that was emphasized when working in a team was that project managers need to pull in the same direction and show interest in another project manager's project through checking how their own project connects, interacts and affects another manager's project. By

adopting this attitude, delivery dates will be met and success will be shared by the overall project.

The women project managers believed that knowing people's strengths, weaknesses and capabilities is important to project management and would also help them to decide on how they could empower people to perform better. Working with people requires a good understanding so that they can be placed in the correct positions.

*Most of Project Management work relies on other people carrying out their tasks, so you need to know the individuals that are involved, their capabilities in order for you to make the decisions and also empower the people ... (R10)*

#### **b) Building relationships**

The importance of building relationships in a project was mentioned. This could be achieved through being involved with people in other disciplines, and building relationships with contractors.

One of the interviewees described the need to work and build relationships with people in a project. She explained her interests in knowing and understanding what other people in different disciplines do, and that this helps to broaden her horizon and knowledge in terms of understanding the project as a whole and how her role and job fits into the picture of the whole project.

*In a project environment, leadership for me is about relationships, you need to have relationships with people ... I cannot work alone, you cannot work in the island here, and you need people ... So I have to understand their business ... (R6)*

It was pointed out that building relationships through respecting everyone, regardless of their positions is important.

*I'm more into ensuring that I create a warm environment around me, so relationships to me is important with the people that I work with. It is important for me to show that I respect the people ... (R2)*

Another participant explained the importance of building relationships with the contractors and emphasized that working consistently from the start and clarifying roles and expectations with the contractor creates a good working relationship.

While a number of the respondents pointed out that building relationships is an important aspect of leadership, in contrast one pointed out that some people are there to only work and not be bothered about building relationships. In such instances, such people have to be properly managed.

*But in some cases you find that people are there, they are there to work and they could care less about the relationships ... (R5)*

Building relationships with employees is of utmost importance to achieve success. Prabhakar (2005) explained that a relationship-oriented approach was a contributing factor to the success of a project. A project environment requires relationships which are built on trust. Lekganyane and Oosthuizen (2006) emphasized trustful relationships as an important factor towards the success of projects. When people develop trust, it results in a shared common goal, satisfaction and increased productivity (Lekganyane & Oosthuizen, 2006). The women project managers regarded building relationships as highly imperative in projects. They described the need to work and build relationships with people in a project. The need to build relationships through being involved with people in other disciplines was explained as an important factor in broadening one's knowledge of the overall projects. It was also stated that relationships should be built on respect, because when people are respected, they deliver. Building relationships with contractors was also discussed by the project managers and it meant working consistently and having clear expectations so that contractors can be efficient in their delivery of the project.

There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the women project managers and the views of women leaders that have been previously studied by other researchers. Chapman (1975) found that when women are placed in leadership positions, they tend to display relationship oriented behaviors as compared to men, which is consistent with societal expectations. George (2003) described that in a study done in health care leadership, female executives presented a management style that was relationship-oriented and collaborative. The study by Helgesen (1990) on four women executives also showed that they strive to build relationships with their business associates.

**c) Engaging people in decision making (participative)**

*You see if you involve people either in clearing or clarifying the roles or decision making, they tend to own what they're doing, you know ... So if you make them feel part of the solution, part of the team, then in that manner they also feel important and they also feel that their role is important. (R12)*

The women project managers interviewed listed participative and people oriented characteristics as a critical characteristic for successful project managers. They regarded these leaders as knowing that project success is achieved through people performing tasks. They emphasized that this therefore requires a project manager that understands people, cares for the people, and engages them in making decisions that impact on them. Leading people effectively requires that you understand their capabilities so that they can be placed accordingly when they are given tasks and they can complement each other according to their weaknesses and strengths. By so doing, you are building a winning team. The women project managers interviewed felt strongly that knowing people's strengths, weaknesses and capabilities is an important characteristic for a successful project manager.

A people oriented leader understands that the most important task of a manager in project is to create strong working teams to perform tasks. A project is structured into different disciplines which are run by different people; therefore, the success of a project depends on the team's effort and not on individuals. Dolfi and Andrews (2007) described a project manager as one having the characteristic of a team worker. Team work means that the people are working together in harmony and trust and respect each other. The project manager is

responsible for creating an environment of team trust because if people cannot trust and respect each other, then the team will be disoriented. The study by Yang, et al. (2011) on the relationship between leadership styles, teamwork and project success showed that high levels of leadership improves relationships among team members. The study indicated that teamwork has a major influence on project performance. The women project managers interviewed recognized the importance of team work. The managers explained that the delivery of a project is met through leading teams. It was also pointed out that communicating expectations from each team player fosters a team spirit rather than an individual effort. What also came out strongly in the interviews was that women project managers explained the importance of not working in silos. They explained that team work is about working together through checking how their own project connects and interacts with another project and also by checking how decisions made in their project can impact the overall project.

This shows that the women project managers comprehend the impact that team work has on project delivery. From the analysis, it is clear that project success is dependent on teams and it is up to the project manager to ensure that they master this skill so that they can meet the delivery of the project according to the schedule, cost and quality. This finding corroborates with Melero (2011) who stated that the growth of female managers in workplaces encourages more interpersonal relations among team members and improves the management practice. In the same light, Rosener (1990) explained that in a recent survey done, women demonstrated a characteristic of transformational leadership by getting subordinates to engage in team work and have shared goals. Research conducted by Midgley (2003) on the role of women in Eskom, found women to demonstrate qualities associated with transformational leadership and EI more than their male counterparts. This is a contradiction to the findings reported in this study which showed that women project managers lack on the self-management and self-awareness capability of EI in terms of controlling and dealing with their emotions.

The women project managers interviewed showed a strong passion for people. They understood the importance of people and showed consideration for people. The findings seem to be consistent with those of other studies that suggested that the feminine characteristic - people orientation which was one of the characteristics recommended for changing and rapid

environments and has been reported as one of the leadership qualities required for project success and organizational success in the 21st century (Appelbaum, et al., 2003).

**iv. Dealing with cultural diversity**

A number of the respondents highlighted the importance of dealing with different groups and cultures of people in a project.

*... someone who is able to handle cultural diversity because in the project you can have people who are Sotho, Xhosa, English and all of those so you should be able to know their cultures and align them as such. (R13)*

Project teams consist of people from different cultures and are therefore susceptible to cultural conflicts. A project manager requires the ability to deal with people's cultural diversities in a project and to be able to resolve any issues rising from cultural differences. The women project managers that were interviewed are working for mega projects which consist of different groups of people and they express the importance of cultural sensitivity in managing people from different cultures in order to be successful. Werhane (2007) stated that global leadership, which consists of cultural diversity challenges, requires women to exhibit collaborative behavior in their leadership style because this behavior is advantageous in multicultural organizations.

**v. Developing others**

Many of the respondents reported that grooming and training their subordinates is an important aspect of leadership and that it adds value to their work.

*They came here as trainees, they were developed by me ... and I always say, you are not doing it for me, do it for yourself because one day you are going to be in the same position ... I empower my people ... (R6)*

Although a number of the respondents pointed out that grooming and training their subordinates is an important aspect of leadership, in contrast, one felt that time constraints

limits her ability to develop her subordinates. She did not see mentoring and coaching as a requirement of the project that she is involved in.

*... You have people underneath you and in most cases you have to be interested in those people, in the development of those people but I'm not sure whether we really have time for that in these projects. I know somewhere else maybe that will be a requirement but I wouldn't put it as a requirement at the NBP because we are more interested in getting the project done and getting the work done rather than developing people and things like that. (R2)*

It is important to note that most participants were actively involved in training and developing their teams as this is an important aspect of their role as project managers. However, this particular participant is expressing her difficulty in training her team due to pressure and time limitations in her role. This has resulted in her not performing the function of a mentor, although she acknowledges the importance of developing and training her team.

Developing others forms one of the competencies for effective leaders and is a trait required for EI (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). Fisher (2010) described the behavior to develop others as a critical skill of an effective project manager. Developing people in projects helps with the succession plan. The project managers believe that training and grooming their subordinates adds value to the project because during the times when they are not at work, then there will always be someone who can fill in to carry on with the tasks. This is very important to the project because there will be no time where a project will be stopped or delayed because the leader is not at work. Other managers developed people who joined the company as trainees up to a point where they were competent enough to perform with minimum supervision. The managers are even comfortable to go away on leave because they have trained their subordinates well and are confident that they can perform the tasks in their absence.

#### **vi. Listening**

The significance of listening to people and understanding them was emphasized, most especially when people give their views and ideas on how things can be improved and being open to listen to criticism for improvement.



An environment that involves working with people requires good listening skills. This is applicable also in a project management environment. Good listeners are able to identify with people and hear people's issues, suggestions and ideas. Listening gives an impression of care and interest in the people that are being led. When people know that they are being listened to by their leaders, they communicate easily, are more open, gain confidence and develop trust in the people leading them. Fisher (2010) in his research quoted practitioners who referred to an effective and competent manager as having good listening abilities. Sunindijo et al. (2007) stated that good listening has been identified as one of the leadership behaviors required to influence people. The women project managers interviewed pointed out that listening is a two-way street, where one has to listen in order to be heard. They explained the importance of listening especially where people give ideas on how things can be improved for better results in a project. These findings of the current study are consistent with those of Coughlin, et al. (2005) and Rosener (1990) who stated that women who had been successful displayed the feminine characteristics of being good listeners.

**vii. Continue learning from other people**

Few of those interviewed shared their views on the value of learning from other people in order to grow as a project manager. One of the participants explained that she learns from the graduates who are in her team because they have learnt new systems and bring new ideas which she benefits from.

Being a project manager does not mean that you know everything. The slogan 'we learn till we die' is very much applicable to the project environment. Project management is very volatile and vibrant; therefore, there is always room for growth and improvement. This was indicated very well by the women project managers who stated the importance of learning from different people in a project, such as new graduates, their senior managers, colleagues and other project managers. They explained that there was value in learning from other people in order to grow as a project manager. This finding is in line with findings from research by Kass, et al. (2006) of female surgical leaders who suggested that skills learned from different discipline areas contributed to women advancing in the surgical field.

**viii. High work ethics (integrity)**

A small number of participants voiced the importance of high work ethics as a requirement for leading people and having integrity to always act in Eskom's best interest.

*I think the first one for me, which I say is very important is to have high work ethics because as you lead people, they follow you, they follow the way you conduct yourself, with integrity, honesty and you must make sure you don't have double standards. (R3)*

Every business expects employees to conduct themselves with integrity and perform their duties according to business work ethics. The women project managers viewed high work ethics as a requirement in leading people because people follow and copy what their leaders do. Emphasis was also put on the fact that leaders should treat everyone the same and not be seen to be favoring some team members. The study by Kass, et al. (2006) on female surgical leaders identified strong work ethic as one of the critical success factors.

#### **d) Comparing leadership styles**

In general, the interviewees felt that they did not require a different style of leadership to their male counterparts. They stated that the requirements of the project are the same and should not be dependent on gender. The project requires a project manager with certain skills and style and it should not matter whether they are male or female. What was highlighted was that in the line of work, women had made much progress and are proving that they can do equally well, what men do.

*... Requirements for a project manager are the same. Leading or managing that project requires the same skill or same style, whether you are male or female. (R3)*

The natural characteristics of being feminine were unfortunately viewed as a weakness by one of the respondents' superiors. Women leaders tend to be mothering in the workplace and one of the respondents explained that she was rebuked by her superior for 'mothering' her subordinates and was encouraged to view herself as their leader and not as their mother. Her superior viewed her mothering nature as a weakness in the project environment.

A view that was strongly expressed when comparing the leadership styles of women to their counterparts was that of women having to embrace their unique characteristics and not to change to be like men or to lead like men. Reference was also made to the importance of EI which enhances leadership.

*... I can't explicitly say there should be this style, that is for men and this style for women, but I think women should just be women and not try to be the same as men and lead like men. I think women should be aware of whom they are and what their EI is and lead according to that, there should be no match and there should be no distinction. (R14)*

*I don't believe that you should become a man; the warmth, the understanding, the listening, you know, it will still come out. You will still be different from a man but you learn without changing who you are, how to manage and be the leader ... And I don't have to be aggressive but I need to be assertive, you know, there's a difference. Men might be aggressive but I mustn't be like that. (R9)*

This finding corroborates the ideas of Helgesen (1990) who concluded that women managers do not have to convert to masculine qualities associated with men, but as women they have an advantage to possess feminine qualities, such as responsibility, connection and inclusion, which are necessary to operate a successful and profitable business.

The participants stated that dealing with different situations might require a woman to convert to masculine characteristics and be strong to deal with issues as men do but this does not mean losing their feminine motherly characteristic.

There is a similarity between the attitudes expressed by the participants in this study and those described by Unnithan (1997) who indicated that the success of women in business meant that women had to exhibit masculine qualities, such as being strong, competent and confident, while sustaining their stereotyped feminine qualities. Unnithan (1997) made a plea for a paradigm shift that would integrate the feminine style into the traditional male business.

Other natural characteristics of women that were identified as being an advantage in their leadership was that they are more people-oriented – that they are kinder, take care of people's needs, and are respectful and sensitive in how their decisions will impact on people. The participants explained that this is in contrast to men who normally make decisions without thinking about another person.

*We normally bring a different flavor in terms of how we see things. You think and you say, but how are the people going to be affected, you try to put yourself in that person's shoes before you make certain decisions and all that stuff ... but if you look at the men, when they have decided, they have decided and that's it. Who gets hurt along the way, they don't care. (R6)*

The participants are showing a people-oriented characteristic which matches that of the study of Appelbaum, et al. (2003) which found that women exhibited people-oriented skills in their abilities to listen to others, show sensitivity and develop relationships in the working place. The study by Helgesen (1990) was similar in showing that women executives strive on building relationships with their business associates. This provides them with a competitive advantage over their male counterparts. Appelbaum, et al. (2003) also found that women who were higher on people-oriented skills express a collaborative team approach that empowers employees and customers compared to men who were higher on business-oriented skills.

Emphasis was placed on being true to one-self as a woman because imitating a man cannot be sustained for very long.

*You will not survive, you are not a man. Okay, you will sustain it for a year or two but you are not going to last for five years because you are not a man, you are not designed to be a man, your EI is not of a man, you are a woman, you are nurturing and it is not going to change If you start to be hard and lose your nurturing part, you lose yourself. (R14)*

The results of the study indicate that the women project managers understand who they are and believe that they are placed in the management positions because of their competences.

They do not allow perceptions to define their roles in a male dominated environment. Even though project requirements are not defined according to gender, societal perceptions can set limits on the jobs that men and women can do (CGE, 2000). The characteristics displayed by the women project managers – being people-oriented (kindness, respectful, warmth, sensitive to others) are consistent to what culture links to feminine characteristics, as compared to masculine characteristics which reflects competencies of decision making and business skill traits (Chugh & Sahgal, 2007; Moran, 1992).

#### **4.1.2 Theme 2: Impact of the leadership style on the delivery of the project**

The leadership style of the project manager has a direct impact on the project. The project manager among other things gives direction, coordinates and integrates all the activities related to the project. Therefore, the style that they deploy can result in the failure or success of the project.

##### **a) Improved team work**

The participants felt that team work is required to meet delivery dates. Thus, they encourage team participation and group work as opposed to working individually. Their perception was that when people work together and share the same objectives, then the project will be successful.

*I believe that projects get executed by teams and the stronger and the more aligned your team is, the better your outputs. The more segregated your teams are, the worse the outcome of the project, so I guess my style would be to strengthen my team as much as I can. (R3)*

##### **b) An engaged team**

Participants emphasized that working with people in a project requires a project manager that engages people and is a good communicator and can convey accurate information to people which will align them to the same objectives of the project. Failure to give direction through communicating and engaging people will result in them being despondent and this will have a negative impact on the schedule, and milestones will not be met.

*I would say communication and engagement, that type of leadership where you engage people and communicate, the consequences of that, if you don't do that, in terms of schedule, in terms of the people knowing where they are, what needs to be done; people will be lost ... (R6)*

**c) A motivated team**

A project manager that can motivate their team to perform to their highest levels achieves higher production and a team that can deliver within budget and on time.

*The project would totally fail altogether because of the type of leadership style that the project manager brings into the project. It would be someone who encourages, someone who enables someone who envisions his project team and in that scenario you get a final product, you know, of a high quality standard and those people because they're energized, they're empowered, you know they would be able to deliver within the allocated time and within the budget, if not under the budget. So that would be the impact of that project leader. (R5)*

The contingency school of leadership emphasizes the importance of matching the leadership style to a particular situation and adjusting that leadership style to changing situations (Müller & Turner, 2007). It is therefore imperative for a leader to understand their leadership style and how it impacts on the delivery of the project.

The women project managers that were interviewed pointed out that the leadership style of a project manager can have an impact on the failure or success of a project. The participants highlighted that a project manager who is a team worker, communicates, engages, motivates people and possesses qualities that will impact on the delivery of a project in a positive way. Having these qualities was viewed as understanding that projects are executed by people working in teams and the stronger the team, the better the output. Yang, et al's. (2011) study indicated that team work has a major influence on project performance. Communication was viewed as critical to the project because it meant properly conveying the objectives of the project. The women project managers emphasized that the delivery of the project requires sharing information through communicating and engaging people as failure to do so will have a

negative impact on the project because people will be disorientated in terms of what needs to be done. Thus, they emphasized the importance of encouraging and motivating the team to willingly perform to their highest potential as this would guarantee productivity and a team that will deliver the project.

Rosener (1990) referred to women who engage teams through shared goals as transformational leaders and also women who encourage participation and sharing of information as interactive leaders. She referred to this leadership style as being competitive in an environment which is economically diverse. The women project managers reflected an understanding of the impact of their leadership style on the delivery of the project. The strong perception raised was that having project success requires the manager's ability to apply suitable leadership styles to people management. Burke (2004) denotes that the leadership style can affect employee confidence and productivity, therefore good leadership leads to increased confidence and productivity, which results in project success.

#### **4.1.3 Theme 3: Challenges faced by women project managers at EED**

Women project managers are faced with a number of challenges in the working environment. The challenges identified were categorized into two groups; challenges related to being female and challenges related to being a project manager.

##### **a) Challenges related to being female**

One of the challenges that were pointed out by the female project managers is competition among the females themselves. The competitive environment prevailing in the workplace made it difficult for the women to support each other and rally behind one another when things were difficult. It was pointed out that this was a 'pull her down syndrome'.

*I think we have this thing that is called 'pull her down syndrome', we pull each other down big time. We are so jealous of each other, we are like, if Busi is climbing the ladder, what about me and people are going to think she is cleverer than me; there is no way I am going to support her. (R3)*

A respondent was of the view that women project managers lack EI. They find it difficult to detach their emotions from their work and this was detrimental to their success.

*... We lead when things are still cozy and good, when they start being stressful we want to cry, when it gets too much we want to scream that nobody listens. Our women lack EI, we need to be able to take the punches and move on ... (R10)*

Women project managers reported lack of support amongst each other. It is important for women to support each other in a working environment, because through support, they can learn from one another, advise each other on issues affecting them and share ideas for development. The women project managers mentioned that in NBPs, they do not have any women forums where they can engage issues for development. In his research, Govender, (2005) pointed out that lack of support amongst women can result in limited transfer of knowledge and skills which are important in their development.

Even though the women project managers explained the importance of EI in women leadership and demonstrated qualities associated with EI, there was a view that they lacked detaching their emotions from work which could inhibit their success. Sunindijo, et al. (2007) cited Goleman (2001) who defined EI as the ability to be considerate of other people's feelings and properly manage our own emotions and relationships. Emotional resilience forms part of the eight competencies that make up the EQ. Cherniss, et al. (2006) quoted Goleman (2001) who suggested that the EI competency was more appropriate in determining potential for top positions, developing and promoting leaders. Women managers who fail to manage their emotions could be viewed as nominal, therefore limiting their chances for promotions to top management positions. Furthermore, Sunindijo, et al. (2007) cited Carmeli (2003) who concluded that senior managers who possessed higher EI performed better at their job compared to their counterparts with lower EI. There is a need for raising awareness of EI in women leadership.

#### **b) Challenges related to being a project manager**

General challenges related to being a project manager at Eskom NBPs were also identified. One of the main challenges that were identified by the participants is the difficulty in working



with contractors. The majority of the participants interviewed felt that the contractors had an upper hand in the project and that one has to handle the relationship carefully. One of the issues with contractors is that they do not always follow the proper communication channels. The contractors seem to have free reign with little restrictions and this puts the project managers under a lot of pressure. The way the contracts are written poses challenges for the project managers because the contracts seem to favor the contractor and this makes it difficult to make the contractors more accountable.

*The contracts are not written in a manner that benefits the employer. There is basically nothing much we can do to hold the contractor accountable in terms of non-performance. (R4)*

Under-resourcing is often a major challenge faced by the project managers. The projects are under-resourced both in terms of financial resources and human resources. This makes the work of the project manager difficult.

*You find yourself doing everything. You find yourself doing document controlling, you are doing filing, you are managing the contract, you are doing cost estimation, you are also looking at the contractors programs and trying to determine where he can do things faster. (R4)*

Lack of understanding of policies was raised by project managers as a challenge.

*Most of the challenges are just to understand and to get a grasp of policies and procedures of Eskom, of managing projects. With policies you need to know them. Most people who have been with Eskom long, they know the policies. (R3)*

High turnover at projects level was also raised as a challenge because continuity with initiatives is always difficult if key people leave the project for better opportunities in other organizations.

*I think there are always people challenges because people are always looking for higher positions and more money, etc. And also the amount of people that leave, from top management; that is a bit scary. What we have experienced of the project is that there's a new site manager or site director every 8 to 10 months. (R4)*

The external partnership that Eskom has established with B & V was also raised as a challenge for the project managers. There were two issues raised:

The first issue was a clash in the leadership styles of B & V representatives and the project managers. The leadership style of B & V is autocratic with no concern for people.

The second issue was the nature of the different objectives between the two companies which tend to clash. Whilst Eskom's drive is to transfer skills and balance gender equity, its partner's drive is to get the task done but show no interest in transferring skills and developing people. This is posing a problem because B & V managers, who are all male, hold superior positions to the Eskom managers.

*The biggest challenge is having to partner with external partners like B & V International Company. Their leadership style is different, they are different people, they are more than autocratic leaders because it is just task, task, task ... their leadership style is not managing the work, it is managing people. You need to call people, talk to people and explain to people why things should be done. (R14)*

A participant made a very important observation which has implications for the NBP. She explained that because of the myriad of challenges that the women project managers' face, they are likely to leave the NBP and look for employment elsewhere, where there are less challenges.

*I think women have a lot of challenges but I think women are on the right track. They are doing well, but I am worried at the same time that I think the NBP is very new ... but if you look at the future, by talking to people and listening to women ... a lot of women are not prepared to stay in the New Build, they leave. After four or five years and they*

*source work somewhere else because of the challenges that they get and the support that they are not getting; that is the main reason why they leave. (R14)*

#### **4.1.4 Theme 4: Barriers that prevent the advancement of women project managers into senior management positions**

There are a number of barriers that were identified by the women project managers that prevent them from rising to senior management positions, namely gender stereotyping, lack of qualifications, fear of not succeeding, family responsibilities, and lack of networking skills and time.

##### **a) Gender stereotyping**

A number of the interviewees expressed the sentiment that some of the males that worked under them were not comfortable with having a female project manager and so they undermined them. The respondents also reported that they are not given full responsibility and accountability in the project whereas their male counterparts are fully trusted with the projects that they manage.

Other negative perceptions that are perceived to be prevalent among males which affect women project managers are that women are lazy; they are in their positions just because they are beautiful, etc. Women therefore said that they have to work twice as hard as men in order to prove themselves.

*There are a lot of perceptions about women leaders, I mean you would find that they would tell you that women are lazy, they don't come to work, they just want to beautify themselves and all of that and really it is up to us as women leaders to prove that that is not correct ... As much as you can work hard, it's still there that you cannot perform as good as your male counterpart. (R3)*

There was also a general perception among the women that were interviewed that women project managers are under pressure to perform and have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts in order to prove their capabilities. It is taken for granted that men know what

they are doing but for the females, they have to prove themselves first before they can be accepted. This makes it even difficult for them to take leave.

The negative perception that women cannot be good leaders was also raised as a barrier that prevented them from being promoted to higher positions. The negative perception meant that the women were sometimes bypassed for promotions.

*It's something that I observed and it's only that perception that women cannot be leaders ... Until they have that respect, that yes you can do this, you can lead this project. You have to show them before they can recognize you. (R11)*

A respondent indicated that society's perception of women was detrimental to their success.

*I think barriers for me; it's more perception about women than the reality of the situation ... societal expectations of the women, to say a woman can do up to so much. (R6)*

The female project managers that were interviewed found it difficult to challenge their male colleagues, especially their seniors, even if they realized that they were being treated unfairly.

*We don't demand as much, we don't challenge, you know when you get given a task, I am saying this because I'm referring to myself. I don't challenge a lot of things my seniors give me, even though I can pick up that this guy doesn't trust me, doesn't trust that I can do A, B, and C, but I don't go and challenge it. I shy away, sometimes I feel that I have done so much, I deserve to be promoted but I am so scared to go and approach my senior and say I want an increase or I need to be promoted. I feel I have got what it takes. (R3)*

The constant undermining of women's capabilities as project managers in a technical environment was pointed out by most of the participants. Gender stereotyping in the workplace was also highlighted.

*When they come in a room and they get to meet this project manager, some will look down upon you ... So you do come across those situations whereby you'll be undermined and then you just have to rise above the occasion and do your job. ... But there is still that stereotype that women cannot handle big projects or even technical projects. They expect you are coming and waiting, maybe you are a secretary or a, I don't know, or something that's got to do with a softer skill rather than the hard skill.*  
(R15)

The interviewees felt that because of their age (mostly younger than their male counterparts), they were discriminated against. This situation was worsened by the fact that they were females in a male dominated environment.

*I struggle a little bit with the older guys, especially the white guys. Why, because they feel like I don't have what it takes to manage them or to lead them, so whenever we interact they always try to defy my instructions ...* (R3)

The women project managers continuously face challenges in leadership positions and have to continuously work twice as hard to prove their competencies, because they are in a field that has been previously dominated by men. Some of the explanation for these findings could emanate from the societal perceptions which dictate women to be subordinates to men, and to be submissive and powerless (CGE, 2000). Women are therefore perceived to lack leadership qualities and men struggle to be under their leadership (Powell, 2011). This affects women in the working environment today. Moran (1992) argued that despite attempts such as affirmative action to increase the number of women in leadership, the existence of traditional stereotypes still remains a major influence and continues to hinder women in leadership positions.

Societal gender stereotyping still exists to a great extent, particularly in South Africa and it is a major barrier to the advancement of women to top positions. The women project managers that were interviewed felt that there was a negative perception that women cannot hold leadership positions and were not as competent as men in managing projects. Powell (2011) argued that when it comes to leader preferences across the globe, employees still tend to

prefer male managers over female managers because of the negative perception associated with women. In the same light, the research shows that one of the challenges faced by women project managers was that their subordinates were skeptical of their abilities to lead and gave them problems. One of the participants gave an example of a situation that she faced when she was first appointed as a project manager. On approaching the subordinate, she found that her subordinate had a problem with her as he had never been managed by a woman and felt that she did not have the experience because she was young. Moran (1992) argued that even though women are assuming leadership roles today, the acceptance of women to many individuals is still difficult.

**b) Lack of qualifications**

One of the barriers that were pointed out by the participants is that women lack the right qualifications needed for higher positions. Most of the positions at senior management level require a Master's degree and not many of the women have upgraded their qualifications to a Master's degree.

*The other barriers is qualifications, if I am an M17 then I will think that with the qualifications that I have I am fine, but for me to go to an E-Band then I need to do some sort of Masters somewhere. (R13)*

The women project managers explained that they have high aspirations of studying further, but they found it difficult to balance work and studying. One particular participant pointed out that she ended up dropping out of a course that she had registered for because she could not handle the pressure of studying whilst working full time. At the same time she could not give up her job to study full time.

Most of the positions at senior management level require a Master's degree. Even if Eskom opens up opportunities for promotions to women; their lack of high - level qualifications will prevent them from advancing to top positions in the organization. This is because top positions come with the stipulation that they must be filled with highly qualified personnel. Research by Govender (2005) showed that men moved into senior positions at a faster rate than women and men who held Master's qualifications were likely to earn higher salaries as compared to

their counterparts. Furthermore, the study showed that education could assist females in advancing in the organization; however, his findings indicated that men advance to senior management positions with minimum qualifications such as diplomas and degrees while women need to obtain higher qualifications such as Master's degree before they can be recognized for senior positions.

It was noted from the 15 women project manager's interviewed, that none of them had a Master's degree. However, Eskom as an organization has created avenues for further sponsored study. Since 2004, Eskom has sponsored project managers to study towards a Masters in project leadership and management and if interested, even advance to PhD level. The Masters programme is an initiative to groom existing aspiring project managers at all levels within the organization. The programme which is very intense is targeted at developing the project manager's knowledge and capacity on both theoretical and practical application. This programme is offered across all the divisions of Eskom including EED. The women project managers are encouraged to advance their education through this programme. It is therefore a recommendation to the women project managers to take this initiative. The programme was first offered by the University of KwaZulu Natal in 2004, but is currently being offered by Davinci.

Even though lack of qualifications was identified as a barrier in the advancement of women project managers, this seems to be a women specific problem and not specifically a barrier. Women at Eskom have been presented with opportunities to advance their qualifications so that they can be prepared for senior management levels. One way of dealing with this is that women should find a balance between their work and family. Although Govendors' findings (2005) indicated that men advance to senior positions with minimum qualifications while women need to obtain higher qualifications, Eskom as an organization should not gender base promotions, but rather promote based on merit and performance.

**c) Fear of not succeeding**

Some of the women interviewed felt that the fear of failure kept them in the positions that they are in and caused them to avoid opportunities for advancement. They expressed a fear of

not making it in the male dominated environment. They recognized the pressure that comes with certain positions and thought it was better for them to stay where they are.

*I think they don't stretch and spread their wings, there is still that element of fear or I don't know, I am talking from my side like for instance, sometimes I will see a position there and I think ... I don't think I will manage ... (R8)*

Fear seems to create a lack of confidence in whether the women have what it takes to perform in higher positions. Fear can be a stumbling block in the advancement of women to higher positions. In this case, the women project managers would rather stay where they are instead of seeking opportunities for advancement because they are scared that they will not cope and do not think they can face up to the pressures and challenges that come with a higher position. Cubillo and Brown (2003) in their study of women in educational leadership and management pointed out that fear of failure was identified by theorists as a barrier to women's progress and quoted Cubillo (1999) who stated that women's lack of confidence had nothing to do with the lack of faith in women's abilities, but was a result of being unfamiliar with the men's domain; however, the fear tends to fade once the women are familiar with the aspects of the job.

**d) Family responsibilities**

The respondents also pointed out that their family responsibilities are a hindrance to their rising to higher positions. This is related to women not being able to work too far from their families or spending protracted periods of time away from home on projects that would advance their careers. In such instances, they choose to stay at home and miss out on such opportunities. This finding corroborates with research by Govender (2005) who found that family commitments are a barrier that hinders women from advancing in the corporate ladder. Research conducted on women executives stated that women felt that their choices were limited and did not have the desire to take up opportunities for career advancement because of family responsibilities (George, 2003; International Labour Office, 2004).

**e) Lack of networking skills and time**



Lack of networking skills and time for networking were seen as a barrier in terms of women advancement. Networking was one of the skills that were pointed out as increasing one's acceleration in the workplace. Some of the participants felt that they did not have the time to go for networking events after work; they just want to get home and be with their children. This is different to men who have time to network, advice and support each other.

Through networking, information and ideas relating to the work are shared. Because such networking sessions occur after working hours, the managers indicated that time was a limiting factor because of family responsibilities. The women acknowledged that men network easily by comparison; they do not have as much family responsibilities as women. In a similar study done on the advancement of women to senior positions, Govender (2005) stated that networking amongst women can help in the career growth because through networking they provide each other with support and direction.

#### **4.1.5 Theme 5: Factors that contribute to the success of women project managers**

The research shows that there are a number of factors that contribute to the success of women project managers. These include previous work experience, training received from Eskom, coaching from the manager and personal determination.

##### **a) Previous work experience**

Most of the respondents pointed out that the experience that they had acquired from previous jobs contributed to their success as project managers.

*I think for me I have been fortunate in that I have done a lot of Contract Management before I did Project Management, so when I started out I started helping my other partners to understand what is FIDIC, what role does FIDIC play within the contract.*  
(R10)

The participant explained that she gained valuable experience in contract management and that this contributed immensely to her success as a project manager. The experience helps her to understand the contracts related to the projects that she is working on.

On the other hand, lack of experience in knowledge of contracts was raised as a serious concern by most participants. Moran (1992) stated that in order for women to be accepted as leaders, they have to be extremely competent and have working experience.

The experience in knowledge of contracts was strongly emphasized by the women project managers interviewed. The NBPs, Medupi and Kusile (except for Ingula) are using the new contract – FIDIC to manage the projects. FIDIC (French acronym for the International Federation of Consulting Engineers) was established in 1913 by a group of French and Swiss engineers. FIDIC was created to a standard set of documentation for contractual agreements which are appropriate for use in different types of construction projects and to simplify the procurement process for easier applicability. The FIDIC contract is an agreement between the employer and the contractor (BCA training, 2012). FIDIC contract is new to Eskom as it has been accustomed to contracts such as NEC. Experience from contract management allows one to understand the dynamics of the contract and interpret contract clauses. It enables one to be able to effectively manage contract administration. Furthermore, contract knowledge gives the project manager an advantage to be ahead of the game and the contractor will not easily trick the project manager in terms of unnecessary claims which could lead to arbitration. In addition, with this type of experience, the project manager is able to handle and address legal letters and issues relating to claims. One of the findings from the research which is important to note is that this is an area of project management which most of the project managers did not have full knowledge and understanding of since they were new to this contract and were not taken for proper FIDIC training. Because of the lack of knowledge of FIDIC, the managers were often outwitted by the contractor who had vast knowledge of FIDIC. This meant that that they were susceptible to claims and being played by the contractor because of their lack of knowledge of the contract.

Experience on such contracts is valuable to the management of the project as the budget, time and quality of the work is properly managed. Managers who lack contract management experience struggle with managing the contract and this could be detrimental in terms of the project's cost and time.

Previous management experience also helps the project managers to understand coordination, interface and integration which are key tasks for project management.

*I think fortunately before I was a project manager I was a manager of a department, not necessarily in projects but I had been a production manager. As a production manager I didn't have people directly reporting to me but the whole power station, you depend on them to get your work done. (R9)*

A key aspect of project management is people skills. The respondents that had worked in leadership positions before they became project managers gained a lot of people skills which were very useful to them in their role of project manager. A respondent who had previously worked as a supervisor before she became a project manager explained the following.

*I was a project supervisor before I became a project manager; it really helped me. I was a project coordinator and then a project supervisor for a period of, I would say four years. Ja, four years before I became the project manager. So in a way I had experience in dealing with people and running a project, you know, even though my authority was not as high as it is now ... So ja, I would say that really helped me because then I learnt a lot in that period of being a supervisor. (R12)*

Previous management experience and leadership positions held were also explained by the managers as having enhanced the project manager's skills in coordination and integration of different functions. This finding is similar to Meredith and Mantel (1995) and PMBOK guide (2004) which described project management as setting out to accomplish the project's goal by applying knowledge and skills. The goal is achieved through coordination and integration of all activities.

Technical experience was cited as one of the factors that contribute to the success of project managers on the NBPs.

*With the years of experience in Eskom I've always been in a technical environment, and I have been firstly in the chemical labs and everything, then I went to a production*

*environment. So I was groomed as a production manager where we were operating these boilers, these units, okay, so that background has helped in this project environment ... So when we are talking about a boiler, I know, I have worked through a boiler ... so my past experience has helped in at least getting into the project. (R15)*

Technical experience which most of the managers had gained on the job was highlighted as a factor that contributed to the success of women project managers on the NBP. Eskom's core business is technical; therefore the NBPs are technically specialized. Technical experience enables the project manager to comprehend the technical side of the work which assists them to make informed decisions. It is important to note that most of the women project managers interviewed had technical qualifications. This finding concurs with Ogunlana, et al. (2002) who quoted researchers such as Gaddis (1959) who stated that successful project managers have acquired competence through an advanced technical environment but further stated that researchers have concluded that while project managers do not have to be technical experts, having a technical skill in a technical discipline will add value to the projects being constructed.

**b) Training from Eskom**

In terms of training and development specifically offered for women, the respondents attested that Eskom did not offer programmes specific to women but did offer general training courses related to the job and that these were for both men and women. The women project managers also pointed out that Eskom did not have structured programmes for development but that each individual had to plan their own personal development. It was however stated by the respondents that the Generation Leadership Programme (GLP) they went through at Eskom contributed to their success. The respondents explained that the GLP took them through all the technical and financial aspects of leadership and gave them an overview of the operations of Eskom. Two of the respondents from those interviewed went through the GLP and the other only attended some courses of the GLP.

*You would learn the business in total, not just your little portion and with Eskom having different divisions as well; it was bringing the divisions together, getting you to appreciate the business. (R9)*

The training received from Eskom not only enhanced the business and technical knowledge of the interviewees, but also assisted participants with people skills.

*I think it's the good training I received from Eskom and also my interaction with different people. Yes, interaction with different people helped me a lot. I understand now what kind of people I'm working with, so it makes my work easier. (R11)*

The GLP was initially offered to both men and women but later offered as part of the gender transformation initiative which aims to develop female project managers. The purpose of the programme is to fast track the development of managers and also to groom those that have been identified for management positions. It is mostly offered to divisions within Eskom such as generation and distribution. The programme is intense and requires the attendees to be one month at work and one month on GLP for duration of two years. The participants explained that this programme had not been offered in the NBPs (EED) because the nature of the project is task driven and pressured to deliver the megawatts. This means that they were not permitted to be away from work for such long periods to attend the two-year course.

**c) Coaching from the manager/other people**

Coaching on the job by a good manager that had an interest in their growth was indicated as a contributing factor to the success of the respondents. They explained that the managers were supportive, saw potential in them and naturally groomed them to success.

*Look, I think it has got to do with my training. You know, when I started out as an Engineer I had a good manager who understood that everybody has got potential and his view was that if you are prepared to work hard; you know he was willing to teach you at the same time ... (R10)*

Coaching from the manager was a common finding that the respondents attributed to their success. The participants expressed a sense of appreciation at having good managers who groomed them to unleash their full potential and afforded them with opportunities to grow and be successful. Since Eskom does not have a formal mentorship programme for women project managers, this initiative from the managers therefore adds value in the advancement

of women. The participants' project managers are displaying the leadership behavior of coaching which was identified in the literature as one of the leadership behaviors required to influence people (Sunindijo, et al., 2007). These women project managers have been influenced to perform to their best and are determined to succeed in their roles as women.

In addition, other respondents highlighted having gained knowledge from other people besides being coached by their direct managers. One of the respondents mentioned that project managers and other people that she had worked with contributed to her development and success.

**d) Personal determination**

Most participants highlighted personal determination as contributing to their success. The interview discussions showed the characteristic of determination amongst these women. Most of these women project managers had started off as engineers and project management was new to them, but then they learnt through being thrown into the deep and still managed to succeed.

*Being thrown in at the deep end, that is how I learned. When I started as a safety officer I was the first female construction safety officer in the Generation division and the new construction regulation was still coming in so I was fast tracked into knowing exactly what's happening and I was responsible for outages and the environment didn't offer pettiness ... it was an environment of time lines, schedules, budget ... and project managers want to do things within safety, quality and within the cost, so that is what made me who I am. (R7)*

**4.1.6 Theme 6: Women project manager's views on gender transformation**

According to Eskom Holdings Limited Integrated Report (2011), promoting women forms part of Eskom's transformation agenda and the current review of the company's business strategy is aimed at presenting opportunities to address a balanced representation at top and senior management levels. Part of the transformation agenda includes the promotion of women. Participants were therefore interviewed on their perceptions of gender transformation at Eskom.

The general view of the majority of respondents is that the organization still remains highly male dominated with males occupying most of the top positions. Gender transformation is progressing on lower and middle management positions and very slowly at higher/top levels.

*Most of us women; majority are an M16, and minimum is in M17; you'll find one or two higher than that. That tells you that there is just this load of people who are just stuck in this middle management, as to why, because we are so many, we are not penetrating through to the higher levels. I don't think the company is doing enough.*  
(R3)

The women project managers interviewed were of the view that senior management positions are being occupied without openly advertising for the positions. In most cases, men are selected to occupy those positions and this hampers Eskom's transformation drive to promote women and it creates prejudice and unfairness in terms of the criteria used to fill the position.

*Look, middle management is actually over populated by women and I think one of the things currently which we were looking at in Medupi was to say, look, middle managers, there are plenty of women but now going to senior management it becomes a challenge and I think it has been an element of unfairness as well to say some of the things that are done by senior management are not explained. It is taken as this is an organization that at times senior managers have to make specific decisions without accounting for those decisions, so I think that also has been a challenge to say how do you decide who is capable of the position if it was not ever opened freely for people to compete for it.* (R10)

The perception among the women that were interviewed is that males get more recognition for promotions than females even though they do the same job and have the same achievements.

*Males still dominate. I see the males are being the more successful ones, because most males, you would see them being promoted in your eyes. It will be communicated that so and so is being promoted because he has done a good job in a certain project, but*

*you find that the same guy that was working with the same female, they were all project managers, the project was completed on time, but the only person who gets recognition and gets promoted will be the male. (R3)*

There is lack of representation of women at the level of decision making at top levels. Women project managers feel like they are implementers of decisions.

It was mentioned that Eskom had previously groomed and appointed the first woman to ever run a power station as part of its gender transformation initiative. She was given full support by the organization, but such programmes are mostly practical to environments such as generation, transmission and distribution, but in the NBPs where the environment is pressured to deliver a new power station, such programmes are not easy to implement and this is compounded by the challenge to actually find competent people to fill the project manager's positions.

It was also discovered through the research that certain areas within the organization are still reserved for men, mostly in NBPs. There is still a tendency to allocate positions according to gender, by deciding that this will be suitable or not suitable based on gender. This limits the number of women occupying senior positions in projects. Women are under a male umbrella and not given opportunities to be senior managers.

The low representation of women results in invisibility to those women already represented. Men are mostly visible. The NBPs have no representation of women in top positions. The main areas of Eskom, which are engineering, project management and construction are still highly male dominated. Where there is representation of women in top leadership positions, those women are mostly in Finance and HR.

There was an expression of lack of trust in Eskom as an organization where the development of women is concerned in the NBPs. This was seen in lack of opportunities given to lead bigger disciplines such as turbines, boilers, materials handling or any other discipline, for that matter. There was a general concern that even though most women are doing well in NBPs, they are



still not given opportunities to lead. As much as Eskom is trying to transform women, there are no channels for exposing women to top leadership positions.

The perception that was raised by the participants was that the women holding the top positions had to work harder than their counterparts to prove their competency and some of them had never been recognized for their accomplishments.

Women project managers voiced that they are doing well and are geared up to take the challenge if presented with opportunities. They emphasized that gender should not be used to decide their level responsibilities and capabilities but rather allocation of positions or even promotions should be based on performance and expertise and not on gender. Another participant attested to seeing women project managers in the NBPs producing results and leading the organization to success. This was evident in how determined they were and pushed to get things done. The impact that the women have is visible in where the project started and the major progress that has been made.

An important point that was raised by the respondents in the interviews is that in as much as women would like to grow to higher positions and expect Eskom to contribute to their growth and development, that there should be fairness. Women should also have the right attitude to show that they are not only put in positions because they are women, but they are there because of their competencies and capabilities to carry out the tasks.

The problem at hand is that Eskom has for a long time been a male dominated environment, especially in engineering, project management and construction, and this cannot be ignored. Gender transformation is a process which needs to be carefully strategized. On paper, Eskom is determined to promote women and balance gender representation at senior and top management levels, but in practice, there are still a lot of hurdles that exist which Eskom must come to terms with before efficient transformation can happen. Women are determined and show readiness in getting to the next level, but Eskom as an organization still needs to acknowledge that there are problems before they can get the process right.

The participants suggested that Eskom needs to provide the requirements needed to occupy the senior management positions. It is up to Eskom to introduce initiatives that will support the women and prepare them for top level positions if their initiative of gender transformation is legitimate and if they want to retain the women project managers. Research done by Governor (2005) stated that women are likely to leave their current companies for other opportunities because of lack of recognition or promotions.

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to establish the leadership styles deployed by women project managers at EED focusing on the NBPs; Medupi, Ingula and Kusile Power Stations. Of interest to the researcher was also to determine the impact of the leadership style on the delivery of the project and to establish the barriers and challenges that affect their leadership. Factors that contribute to the success of women project managers were also focused on. Since Eskom is embarking on gender transformation in the organization, women project managers' views on gender transformation were also examined.

The findings emanating from this research show that women project managers perceive themselves to be strong on people skills. They understand the importance of people in projects and acknowledge that projects are delivered by people and that the success of the project depends on the leadership and the performance of people. In relation to leadership characteristics, the women project managers perceive themselves to have qualities of transformational, democratic and people oriented leadership styles. In addition, the study shows that the leadership style of a project manager determines the success or the failure of a project because how one lead as a manager determines how people will respond to the needs of a project. The leadership style has an impact on the delivery of the project in terms of cost, time and quality. People make projects and as a project manager you have to influence people towards the goals of the project by engaging them in decision making and caring for them, encouraging team work and continuously communicating the objectives of the project.

The women project managers seem to be successful and there were a number of factors that contributed to their success. The findings show that women have what it takes to be in leadership positions and are competent in managing projects; however, there are barriers and

challenges which impede their acceleration to higher management positions. Furthermore, the findings shows that although women are occupying lower middle management positions, there are still fewer women migrating to top management positions. Eskom is still a male dominated environment, even though initiatives for gender transformation exist. The following chapter highlights the conclusions from this research and makes recommendations for Eskom as well as recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusions and makes recommendations on how to overcome the barriers that prevent women project managers' advancement to top management positions and the measurements that top management should take in an effort to accommodate women project managers in NBPs. The recommendations are based on the theory discussed in Chapter 2 and on the results and discussions presented in Chapter 4.

### **5.2 Conclusions**

The research aimed to:

- Identify the leadership styles utilized by women project managers at EED
- Determine the impact of the leadership styles on the delivery of the project
- Find out the challenges faced by women project managers at EED
- Find out the barriers that prevent the advancement of women project managers into senior/top management positions
- Establish factors that contribute to the success of women project managers
- Establish women project managers' views on gender transformation at Eskom

The following are the major findings from the study:

The leadership style of women project managers was established through the research. The findings show that the women project managers mostly demonstrate strong leadership qualities required for effective project leadership and traits required for successful project management. They encompass the following characteristics: decision making abilities, flexibility, goal orientation, motivator and visionary. Some of the behaviors they portray are: communicator, people orientation, relationship orientation, participative, multi-cultural competency, integrity. Therefore, the project managers interviewed portrayed the qualities of the democratic, people oriented and transformational leadership style.

In comparing the leadership styles of women project managers to their male counterparts:

- The managers expressed that the requirements of the project are the same and certain skills and styles are required which are not dependent on gender.
  - They were of the belief that as women, they should embrace their unique characteristics; warmth, respect, listening, understanding and nurturing and not change to be like men or lead like them. They however acknowledged that dealing with different situations may require a woman to develop masculine characteristics and be as strong as men in order to deal with issues, but this does not mean losing their feminine characteristics.
  - The women project managers stated that their natural characteristics; caring for people, and being sensitive to how their decisions impact on people was an advantage in their leadership compared to their male counterparts who made decisions without thinking about the impacts.

The leadership style was viewed as having a direct impact on the project and the women project managers pointed out that the leadership style could result in the failure or success of the project. The impact of the leadership styles on the delivery of the project were identified as follows:

- Improved team work to meet the delivery dates
- An engaged team by properly communicating and conveying accurate information which will align to the same objectives and meet the schedule and milestones
- A motivated team to perform to their highest level and deliver within budget and on time

The following challenges prevailed amongst the women project managers:

- Lack of support amongst each other
- Lack of EI
- Lack of resources
- Lack of understanding of policies

- Lack of understanding the FIDIC contract
- Challenges with external partnerships with Eskom

Although Eskom might be blamed for not doing enough to advance women to top positions in the organization, there are some barriers that were identified through the research which impede the progress of women. Some of these barriers are related to limitations imposed by motherhood and womanhood. Some of the barriers identified were:

- Gender stereotyping
- Lack of qualifications
- Fear of not succeeding
- Family responsibilities
- Lack of networking skills and time

These barriers pose serious impediments to the advancement of women and it is interesting to note that some of the women interviewed had become despondent because of these barriers; they had lost hope of promotion and of rising to the top.

The study showed the following factors that contribute to the success of women project managers:

- Previous work experience
- Training from Eskom
- Coaching from the manager/other people
- Personal determination

The study identified the following views of women project managers on gender transformation:

- The general views on gender transformation were that the organization still remains highly male dominated with males occupying most of the top management positions, and that there are no clear processes or criteria for promotions. Even when

opportunities for promotions are presented, women perceived that males get more recognition than females even though they do the same job with the same achievements.

### **5.3 Implications of this research**

- The women project managers interviewed pointed out that they have certain characteristics that are unique to women leaders such as caring for people and their feelings, creating strong working teams, building relationships and engaging people in decision making. Previous research by Appelbaum, et al. (2003) and Melero (2011) shows that these traits are mostly prevalent among women and those traits improve management practice. Being people oriented brings trust and respect into the project environment. NBPs are stressful environments; therefore a people oriented project manager creates an environment which helps people to cope with the pressure and stress related to the projects. A people oriented leader also empowers their team members by engaging them in the decision making process. This makes people take ownership of the project and results in them being more interested in the successful completion of the project. These are critical leadership styles which Eskom should nurture and retain in the organization.
- The study showed that even though women project managers have strong leadership skills required for ever changing environments, they lack the self-management and self-awareness capability of EI in terms of controlling and dealing with their emotions. Cherniss, et al. (2006) quoted Goleman (2005) who suggested that EI was important in determining potential for top positions, developing and promoting leaders. Herrera and Bradberry (2007) stated that EI should not be ignored in a workplace as it can significantly improve both the individual and group performance. Emotions which are not controlled can be very disruptive. This is a weakness which could have a negative impact on their work performance and relationships, and can discredit them in terms of promotions.
- The women project managers face a lot of insurmountable challenges in a male dominated project environment. They were of the view that the main challenge that

they face is gender stereotyping. Although they consider themselves to be high performers in their positions, they pointed out that they are often undermined by their male counterparts and seniors. The challenges that the women face demotivates them and some of them indicated that they might consider moving to other organizations. This has negative implications for Eskom as an organization because it means that they may lose valuable staff members in whom they have invested.

- In addition to challenges posed by male counterparts, women project managers are also strained by hostility from their female colleagues. The women project managers interviewed pointed out that they generally do not support each other and are in competition with one another. The lack of support from other females in the project environment means that women sometimes feel isolated. They find it difficult to turn to males for support and even more difficult to turn to other females because they do not want to be perceived as less knowledgeable about the job and therefore not fit for the position of a project manager and not fit for promotion.
- Lack of human resources in critical projects of building new power stations can impose serious strains on the women project managers, and this in turn will have a negative effect on their performance because of being overloaded with other people's work, instead of focusing on the pressing issues of the project and properly managing the project. This could have a negative impact on the project.
- The NBPs are using FIDIC, to manage the contracts. Lack of understanding of FIDIC means not understanding the contracts related to the projects that women project managers are working on. This limits the project managers from comprehending the dynamics of the contract and interpreting the clauses. This could have a cost implication as the contractors can easily manipulate the contract to suit them.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

- Part of the reasons that women go through the challenges as described in the working environment today derives from societal perceptions, which regard women to be



powerless, submissive and subordinate to men (CGE, 2000). This therefore means that women are not recognised as leaders. Moran (1992) argued that despite attempts such as affirmative action to increase the number of women in leadership, the existence of traditional stereotypes still remains a major influence and continues to hinder women in leadership positions. Eskom's top management should therefore introduce awareness programmes and a paradigm shift needs to happen to allow the male co-workers to recognise that any person can be a leader, irrespective of gender.

- EI was pointed out as one of the weaknesses of women project managers in the NBPs. Eskom needs to take cognizance of this. Women leaders in other Eskom divisions could be facing the same challenge. It is highly recommended that Eskom should implement training programmes to help women leaders to understand EI and how to apply it in their lives.
- Women project managers that were interviewed pointed out that they did not understand the process that is followed in terms of promotions. They perceived that men were being promoted rapidly simply because they were males. In light of this, it is recommended that top management should be more transparent in terms of the promotion processes so that there will be no qualms about unfair promotions.
- As the study has shown, Eskom as an organization is not doing as much as it should be doing for women in terms of promoting women and balancing the number of women representation in top management positions. The following two recommendations are made:
  - Eskom management has to set goals for advancing women to the top. In NBPs, it was noted that there is no women representation in the top management positions. Of the 15 women that were interviewed, there is only one woman in a senior management position and she is in the Finance department.
  - This can be achieved by implementing strategies that will close the gap and advance women to the top. This can be done by setting performance criteria

which involves conducting screening on women who are already in the junior and middle management positions. The screening will check the qualifications, experience and achievements. This is a fair and transparent process which will then be used as a selection criterion to promote women based on their performance, capabilities and strengths.

- In terms of training, it was clear from the interviews that women project managers in NBPs do not have dedicated development programmes that are meant for career development. All the existing programmes cater for both males and females. As much as the organization supports training and development, it is up to the individual to set up their own development and advancement according to their needs. Leadership programmes such as the GLPs should be introduced into NBPs as these have been highly recommended as programmes set up to fast track the advancement of leaders. This programme will help assist especially the women project managers who did not have opportunities to work for the Generation etc., to know more about the business and the operations.
- Eskom could introduce structured mentorship training where female project managers are mentored by senior/successful managers as part of their succession planning programme. The programme could include FIDIC training and training on Eskom's policies and procedures.
- Women project managers felt that they had more family responsibilities than their male counterparts. Such family responsibilities meant that at times they could not travel far from home because there would not have been someone to leave the children with. One way in which Eskom could intervene would be to introduce facilities such as nurseries and after-care facilities for employees' children. This would enable women to focus more on their jobs and not worry about rushing home to take care of children and not taking unnecessary time off because the children have no one to take care of them while the mother is at work or while the mother is working late.

- Women project managers should pay more attention to networking as this is one way of accelerating advancement in the workplace. They should put more effort into availing themselves to social events that would increase opportunities for networking.
- It is also recommended that Eskom should establish women's forums that would cater for all the divisions in Eskom. Such sessions could be debriefing sessions where women could provide peer to peer support to one another. In addition, they could also involve motivational speakers and women that are already at top management levels to share their experiences and advise on how they made it to the top.
- Eskom's top management needs to review and improve the human resource planning processes of the organization. The allocation of resources should happen in the planning phase of the project. Failure to get this right could have a negative impact on the completion of the project.
- The nature of the partnerships between Eskom and B & V needs to be addressed. Eskom needs to put in place stringent job contracts for partners which will include training and developing of the women project managers and have an assessment review where the partners' transfer of skills and development can be measured

## **5.5 Recommendation for future studies**

- There are a number of interesting aspects of leadership styles that this research did not address because they were beyond the scope of the project. Future studies could therefore focus on female project managers versus male project managers. It would be interesting to determine the views and perceptions of men and how their leadership styles relate to women.
- This research could be further expanded to include a broader range of women respondents in other divisions at Eskom, such as Generation, Transmission and Distribution.

- Future studies could test the perceived leadership styles of women project managers against the actual leadership styles. This research did not test the leadership styles of the women project managers but relied on their own perceptions and views. Other research projects could go further and test the actual behavior and traits of women project managers.
- In relation to gender transformation at Eskom, future research could focus on views and perceptions of women at all levels in Eskom instead of just focusing on women project managers at NBPs.
- Since the NBPs are new developments within Eskom, further research could follow up on the challenges that women project managers interviewed in this research pointed out and investigate how gender stereotyping in the NBPs could be totally eliminated.

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## Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Name of the interviewee :

Date of the interview :

1. How would you describe the leadership that is required by project managers at Eskom? What are the characteristics of successful project managers?
2. Do you think that female project managers require a different style of leadership from male project leaders?
3. How would you describe the interactions with your subordinates / project members? Have they been supportive towards you as a leader?
4. What do you consider to be the impact of the preferred leadership styles on delivery of the project?
5. What are the challenges that you have faced as a project leader? How did you overcome these challenges?
6. What factors facilitated your job as project leader?
7. Do you consider Eskom to offer leadership training and development programmes for women? If so, are they effective?
8. Is it easy for women in leadership positions to ask for help or take time off from their work? How is the 'culture' of the organization / broader environment towards facilitating the development of female leaders?
9. What are the expectations of women in leadership positions within Eskom?
10. How do you see gender transformation in key positions within Eskom?

11. How have women led as project managers in the NBPs?
12. Do you think that women in leadership positions within Eskom have been given equal responsibilities and accountability to their counterparts?
13. Are women in leadership positions visible within the organization?
14. How successful do you think women in leadership within the organization are? Are there any barriers that hinder their success or development?
15. Are women in leadership positions critical decision makers within the organization?
16. Would you describe your work as successful so far? What are some of the lessons you have learnt in succeeding as a project manager?
17. What would be your advice to other aspiring women project managers?
18. Any thoughts/comments

## Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**Leadership Centre**

**M Com Research Project**

**Researcher:** Busisiwe Maseko (082 709 0051)

**Supervisor:** Ms Cecile Gerwel (031-2608318)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba (031-2603587)

Dear Respondent,

I, Busisiwe Maria Maseko am an M.Com student in the Leadership Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “*Leadership styles deployed by women Project Managers at Eskom Enterprise Division*”. The aim of this study is to establish best leadership styles suited for the project and reflect on the gender transformation in terms of women in positions of leadership within Eskom.

Through your participation, I hope to understand leadership styles practiced by women project managers and how these impact on their success. The results of the study are intended to contribute to the improvement of women into successful leaders.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Leadership Centre, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The interview should last about 45 minutes. I hope you will take the time to participate in the interview.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*This page is to be retained by participant*

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**Leadership Centre**

**M Com Research Project**

**Researcher:** Busisiwe Maseko (082 709 0051)

**Supervisor:** Ms Cecile Gerwel (031-2608318)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba (031-2603587)

**CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*This page is to be retained by researcher*



## 111

Ms. B. M. Pausko  
424 Melville Village  
Fiskade Street  
P. O. Dube  
1800

Dear Mr. Natsopoulos

**PROTOCOL:** leadership styles deployed by women project managers at Eskom Enterprise  
**Division:**

ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0968/2010 (M: Faculty of Management Studies)

In response to your application dated 03 September 2010, Student Number: 205523709 the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given FULL APPROVAL.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study

Yours faithfully

Professor Steve Collins (Chair)  
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

507

cc: Prof. K. Pillay (Supervisor)  
cc: Mrs. C. Madhoo

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